

WEEKLY FREE NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR



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Kent on Sunday

www.kentnews.co.uk December 27, 2015

East edition No 692

NEWS

**Business as usual
at Dreamland**
Five-year credit deal struck

NEWS

**Another bid to
reopen Manston**
RiverOak back in airport fight

NEWS

**Review of
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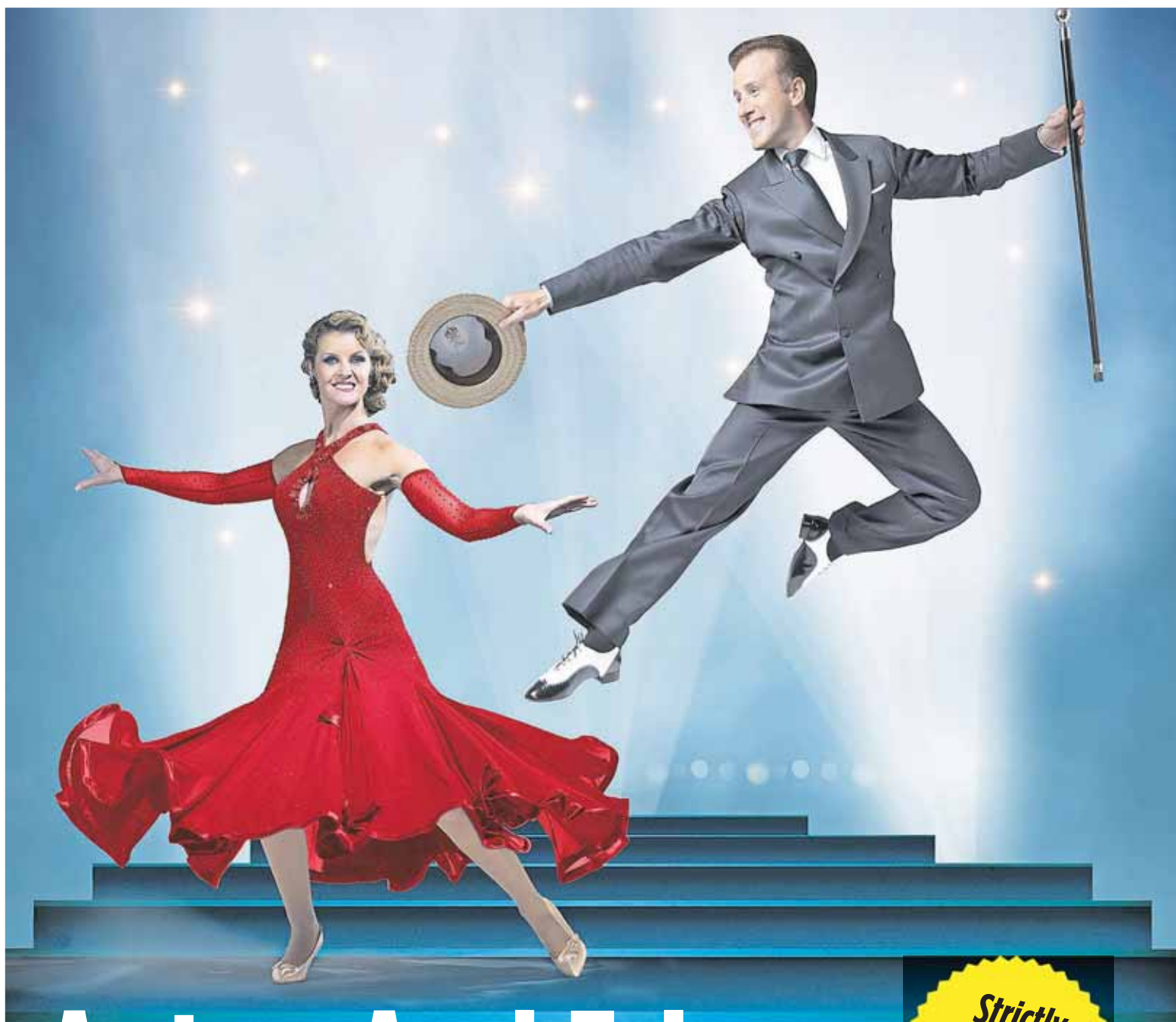
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A happy New Year to our readers and advertisers

THE end of the old year and the beginning of a new year... a time traditionally for most of us to take stock: to ponder careers, relationships, waistlines – and everything in between – and decide to make changes.

We will start out with good intentions and by the start of February most of us will have given up our new job search, settled back into the familiar routine, or spent a fortune on new trainers that will gather dust in the bottom of the wardrobe.

We all do it and, with the pace of modern life, it is all too easy to come up with an excuse to fall off the wagon – 'I haven't had the time' or 'I was going to do it but...'

That is not to say, a yearly review of the way we live our life is a bad thing.

It should really be encouraged as we look to prepare for the seasons

ahead and their promise of growth, light and rebirth.

It is what we look at that is important – and I recall the words of a relative who was always telling me to 'do as you would be done by'.

It really would be a better world if we all treated everyone else how we would like to be treated ourselves.

Having a little respect for other people and realising that we are not the centre of the universe may not cure all the world's ills – but it's not a bad place to start.

And who knows, by doing so we may end up getting the job we always wanted, or may make ourselves happier or become the person we'd like to be.

And finally, we'd like to wish our readers and advertisers a happy and prosperous new year. Thank you for your continued support and let's hope 2016 brings you everything you could wish for...

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Have your say on police £5 council tax increase

Luke May

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POLICE and crime commissioner Ann Barnes has launched a consultation on raising the average family's council tax by £5 a year, after it was announced Kent Police's grant from the government will be cut by more than half a per cent next year.

The funding cut from central government comes after chancellor George Osborne promised to protect police funding in the Autumn Statement.

A rise in council tax would see those in Band D properties pay £5 more a year in council tax.

Police and Crime Commissioner Ann Barnes said: "The overall position for force funding is much better than we thought, for which I am grateful.

"However in the detail the government has cut the cash grant by .6 per cent. To my mind a cash grant next year that is less than this year's settlement is a direct cut to funding, but it is a much better funding situation than we were expecting."

Earlier this month, Kent Police



TAX HIKE: A £5 council tax increase could fund nearly forty new armed response officers in Kent

announced the need for 37 more armed response officers, as well as plans to use £3.5million of reserves to fund rising costs.

Kent is in the bottom 10 forces in the country for council tax precepts, and has been given the option to raise council tax by government, with a consultation launched on Monday.

It would take two years of council tax payments to fund the 37 armed response officers.

Ms Barnes explained: "We face emerging challenges such as child sexual exploitation and cyber-crime and there is the ongoing threat to public safety on our streets – we live in dangerous times and a terrorist attack in the UK remains highly likely.

"The home secretary has, quite rightly, requested that all police forces increase their firearms officer numbers by 50 per cent and we cannot compromise on something

as important as public safety.

"I will use the money raised to boost the number of firearms officers on the payroll.

"Kent is the border to Europe and I have a duty to make sure that the chief constable has the resources he needs to keep us as safe as possible in these difficult times."

The consultation will close on January 15, and is currently available to fill out at www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/take-part.html

£90million patient transport deal reached by Kent health groups

HEALTH groups in Kent and Medway have secured a new patient transport service deal starting from next year - potentially providing some two million journeys.

The service provides free transport for people whose medical condition means they cannot get to or from hospital in any other way.

Three contracts will cover the following clinical commissioning groups in Kent: West Kent, Ashford, Canterbury and Coastal and Thanet.

Currently the service is provided by NSL, and will run out on June 30 next year, though drivers from NSL are being invited to cross to new service provider G4S.

Over the six year contract, said to be worth £90million, nearly two million patient journeys are expected.

The contract includes transporting Kent and Medway patients to and from London hospitals and transporting eligible Bexley and Bromley patients to and from Kent and

Medway hospitals.

Ian Ayres, chief officer for NHS West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group, said: "G4S are to provide non-emergency patient transport for eligible patients in Kent and Medway excluding Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust; renal patients requiring dialysis; and Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust patients.

"There were six bidders in all, several bidding for more than one contract. G4S came top on quality for all three contracts by a significant margin, and was lowest on price for one of them.

"G4S has a good track record of delivering high-quality patient transport services across the country, including in London, Essex and Surrey. We look forward to working with them and with NSL to ensure a smooth transition."

All three contracts have been set up to run for six years with the option to extend by another three at the end of the contract.

Trust earns millions from hospitals' patient parking

EAST Kent Hospitals Trust earns more than £3million a year from its parking charges, it was announced this week.

The trust is among the highest earners in the country, and runs William Harvey, QE QM, Canterbury, Buckland and Royal Victoria hospitals.

An East Kent Hospitals Trust spokesman said: "The total amount

raised through car parking each year is combined income from the trust's five hospital sites and is income from both staff and patients.

"In addition, the figure does not take account of operating costs and once these are deducted, all remaining income is put back into the hospital for patient care and experience."

Plenty of fish in our rivers following new EA project

KENT'S rivers have been filled with more than 7,000 fish as part of a project by the Environment Agency.

The River Medway now has 1,000 more barbel and chub as scientists attempt to learn how to best protect local fish populations in the future.

The Greater Stour near Ashford was filled with 6,000 new fish, to

replace the large number of recently killed fish.

Joe Kitano, Environment Agency fisheries officer, said: "It's great that we have been able to restock fish in Kent.

"The restocking of fish in the Stour will hopefully kick start the fish population following the devastating effects of a pollution incident."



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Record year for Eurotunnel freight service

EUROTUNNEL'S freight service reached record numbers this week, with 2015 seeing its highest ever level of freight traffic.

This year, Le Shuttle Freight service has carried nearly 1.5million trucks between Folkestone and Coquelles. Last week, the service carried its 23 millionth truck through the Channel Tunnel since

commercial services started in 1994.

Carrying around 1,464,880 trucks, the service has beaten its previous highest freight traffic record, set in 2012, when 19million tonnes of freight was carried across through the Channel Tunnel.

The service is set to introduce three new truck shuttles.



HOURS: Shoppers spent hours in cars

Bluewater apologises for traffic chaos

CHRISTMAS shoppers at Bluewater took to Twitter to complain on Monday as delays meant some shoppers were stuck in the shopping centre's car park.

Some were reporting six-hour waits as they tried to leave.

In a tweet to one woman's complaint, Bluewater responded: "Sincere apologies for any inconvenience caused. We're working with Kent Police to resolve the matter as quickly as possible".

A statement from Bluewater read: "Yesterday a broken down vehicle and a high volume of traffic in and around Bluewater caused delays to Christmas shoppers exiting the car parks.

"While the traffic in surrounding areas, including the M25, is out of Bluewater's control, we have a dedicated team who work closely with organisations such as Kent Police and Highways England, to minimise traffic congestion at peak times.

"This includes deploying additional hosts in our carparks to help guests find spaces, as well as implementing traffic controls on surrounding roads.

"In addition, our extended opening hours provide guests with the greatest possible amount of time to visit Bluewater, which helps to reduce traffic on surrounding roads."

Dream continues as park to stay open while company pays off debt

Luke May

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KENT'S own theme park, Dreamland, looks set to remain open as the company which runs it tries to pay back its near £3million debt.

Earlier this month Sands Heritage Limited called a meeting of its creditors as it applied to the High Court for a Company Voluntary Administration (CVA) order.

Following a meeting on Wednesday, 98 per cent of the company's creditors agreed to the CVA, which will see the company pay back its £2.9million debt in yearly instalments over the next five years.

In a statement, Sands Heritage Limited said: "Sands Heritage Limited is delighted to announce that following a meeting of its creditors, it is business as usual for Dreamland Margate.

"The CVA allows Sands Heritage Limited to pay back its debt in full, over the next five years.

"We would like to thank everyone



HOPE: Dreamland will stay open

for their faithful support in Dreamland's first year and look forward to their continued custom and a successful 2016."

Thanet District Council leader Chris Wells, said: "We have done everything possible to support the regeneration of Dreamland and want to see it succeed. It is disappointing that operators Sands Heritage Limited are in financial difficulties. We hope Wednesday's decision will help to resolve this and believe this is in the best interests of local contractors who are owed money by SHL.

"The council took a bold step to compulsory purchase the site and has invested millions of pounds to support the development of Dreamland. This commitment and belief in its future continues with work underway on the second phase of the project - the £1.8m Coastal Communities Fund project to redevelop the former Sunshine Café - and we will also be working on proposals to redevelop the Grade II* listed cinema building in the future."

Margate's theme park has faced a difficult first year after it opened in June, with footfall reduced over the summer due to factors such as Operation Stack and a wet August, on top of closures and delays to the completion of its scenic railway.

£50k benefit fraudster is jailed for two years

AN Ashford woman who claimed more than £50,000 in housing benefit and council tax benefit despite owning a \$357,000 house in America has been jailed for two years.

Patricia Boaden, 49, of Stonegate Farm, Ash Hill, Ruckinge, was found guilty last month of claiming benefits to which she was not entitled.

Boaden bought the property in America in July 2008 with money inherited from her aunt's will.

The house was sold in 2010 to a company owned and operated by the Boadens.

She claimed she had not considered the proceeds she received from the sale of a business or the 85 per cent of her aunt's estate she received as a matter that should be declared for the purposes of the benefits.

Her original application for either benefit made no mention of the property in America, making the claims fraudulent.

Boaden was sentenced to two years in prison at Canterbury Crown Court on December 18.

New flood defence wall in Tonbridge

TWO years after 80 homes in Tonbridge were flooded, a new flood defence scheme has been created to prevent a repeat of the incident.

The new Avebury Avenue flood defence aims to reduce the chances of it happening again.

Ground height has been restored to the rear of the Avebury Avenue flats, reducing the risk of flooding to homes in the area.

The 320m-long flood defence runs along with the River Medway, and will work alongside existing flood defence walls.

The Environment Agency has been working with partners to train community flood wardens to work with communities and emergency services before, during and after a flood.

Lisa Lennox, asset performance team leader for Medway and north Kent, said: "We wanted to ensure that the new defence structure suited its surroundings whilst still providing a suitable level of protection, so the structure is subtle and in keeping with the modern flats of Avebury Avenue."

South east house prices set to soar

HOUSE PRICES in the south east are set to rise higher than the national average throughout next year.

Experts from RICS, the Royal Institution for Chartered Surveyors, estimate the national average for house prices will increase by six per cent, while prices in the south east will rise by seven per cent.

It is the second highest increase in the country, with only East Anglia higher with an expected eight per cent increase.

Housing has been the source of debate with supply issues dominating the private housing market.

Simon Rubsohn, chief economist at RICS, said: "Housing has clearly leapt up the government's agenda but despite the raft of initiatives announced over the past year, the lags involved in development mean that prices, and for that matter rents, are likely to rise further over the next twelve months."

"Measures announced by the government are overly focused on promoting home ownership, discouraging Buy to Let could see private rents take more of the strain if institutional investment doesn't increase."

Airport seeks further approval ahead of future development

By Luke May

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A SPECIAL planning committee will look again at an application for Rochester Airport's redevelopment.

So far, previous plans for the development of the airport have been approved, but due to a change in the report, it must seek reapproval from the special planning committee, rather than go through a judicial review process which could cost the taxpayer more.

Current plans to keep the airport could create 1,000 jobs in the local area, as the council seeks to secure the future of the airport and ensure it becomes a centre for innovation, engineering and technology.

The development has received further backing recently, with George Osborne giving the site enterprise zone status as part of the North Kent Innovation Zone partnership.

The renewed application will include noise reports for councillors to consider.

Plans for the airport, which had been approved in February, include a paved runway to allow modern small aircraft to take off, and decommissioning of a second grass runway.

This will free up more than 10 hectares within the airport's ground for the develop-



JOBS: Development of Rochester Airport could create 1,000 local jobs in Medway

ment of high-tech business, science or technology.

A date for the committee will be set for February, with all documents available at www.medway.gov.uk

Medway council leader Alan Jarrett said: "It is not in anyone's interest to further delay this process, not least the taxpayer who would have had to pick up the bill. The planning committee will be asked to look at the application again, considering all the evidence that is before them."

"We are simply speeding the process up. It is also vital that, given the recent boost by the chancellor with enterprise zone status, we start to move on this project, if it is approved, as we want Rochester Airport to be a place where companies want to come and create local jobs for local people."

A spokesperson from Rochester Airport said: "We have received the news from Medway council, it is good news for Rochester airport and good news for the site's runway."

Six-hour Eurotunnel delays as points fail

EUROTUNNEL apologised for delays last Sunday after people travelling across the Channel faced delays of up to six hours.

Problems started after an issue with points meant trains had to cut their speed from 140km/hour to 60km/hour.

Then, just after 6pm, a broken rail meant part of the tunnel had to be closed for repair works, which lasted around 2 and a half hours.

Burglars caught two hours after theft

BURGLARS who used marbles and a catapult to break into at least two homes were sentenced to six and a half years collectively.

Jamie Button, 43, of St Mary's Road, Strood; Paul Ham, 42, of Windmill Street, Rochester, and Ashley Hammond, 28, from Penge, were discovered using tracking software on a stolen tablet.

Lorry driver cut free

A LORRY driver had to be cut from his cab on Monday morning after a three-lorry crash on the A229 at Bluebell Hill.

Firefighters cut the driver, a man in his 50s, free using hydraulic rescue equipment.

He was released and placed in the care of paramedics and doctors from SECamb and the air ambulance.

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Abuse charity sees 43 per cent rise in cases in 2015

FIGURES released by a domestic violence and abuse charity have shown a 43 per cent increase in the number of people referred to it for support.

In the past year, the Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Service, (or Davss), based in Tunbridge Wells, has received nearly 640 referrals, a quarter of which were stated as high risk.

Co-chair of the charity, Jan Berry, explained the figures:

She said: "Davss started in 2011 and the number of referrals has increased every year.

"We've seen a huge increase in the number of men being referred, there have been around 57 men referred to us in the past 12 months. Its about raising awareness, and having a confidence that



we're going to believe and support anyone referred to us.

"Our service depends on the case, some people might need us to hold their hand and help them through court cases they may go through..

"Most people go through around 35 instances of abuse before they seek help, we train all of our volunteers to professional standards to help anyone in need of our support."

Members of drug ring given 78 years in prison

MEMBERS of a Class A drug ring worth hundreds of thousands of pounds have been given a combined sentence of 78 years.

Twelve people were sentenced on Monday at Maidstone Crown Court, after more than a year's worth of investigations by Kent Police.

Police first began investigating on September 12, 2014, after officers discovered packages containing almost 2kg of cocaine and more than £1,000 in cash after stopping a van at a roundabout near junction 3 of the M2.

During the investigation officers twice found carrier bags filled with bundles of cash.

In November 2014, evidence was found on a caravan plot in Warden Road, Sheerness, of

cocaine being cut on what police have called a "significant" scale.

Nine of those arrested pleaded guilty to conspiracy to supply cocaine.

Ariola Kolicaj, 21, from Hertfordshire, denied a charge of money laundering, but was found guilty by a jury and jailed for 11 months.

Allan Maile, 36, of Three Elm Lane, Golden Green, Tonbridge, pleaded not guilty to conspiring to supply cocaine between October 1 and March 4, he was found guilty and sentenced to six and a half years in prison.

Rikki Clements, 28, of Lady Winter Drive, Minster, was sentenced earlier this year to seven and a half years in jail for possession with intent to supply cocaine and motoring offences.

Family saved from blaze

A MOTHER and her two children were saved from a fire as they slept after a smoke alarm woke them in the early hours of Wednesday morning.

Two fire engines tackled the blaze in the Broadway, Herne Bay, after the family were woken up at 4.30am by the alarm.

Hotel feeds homeless

A MAIDSTONE hotel provided 40 homeless people with a three-course meal.

Oakwood House worked with homeless charity Porchlight to provide a Christmas lunch for 40 homeless people.

The lunch offered a menu including soup, turkey and Christmas pudding.

Bus driver deal struck

PROLONGED strikes in Medway may have come to an end after the bus drivers' union Unite, and bus company Arriva, reached an agreement.

A six-month timetable-dispute has been calmed after a new timetable was introduced, which will be reviewed in March.

Nearly 50 jobs saved

A MARGATE DIY store is to remain open, saving 49 jobs for local workers.

On Tuesday, B&Q announced it had decided to keep its Westwood Industrial Estate store open after striking a deal with another high street retailer. A number of stores nationally were threatened with closure.



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Firm renews Manston interest

By Luke May

luke.may@archant.co.uk

A MERICAN investment firm RiverOak has renewed its interest in taking over the disused Manston Airport.

Last month the firm's CPO bid collapsed after Thanet District Council formally rejected teaming up with the company in the future.

Now the company is looking to acquire the former airport via a Development Consent Order process.

A DCO is the process of getting permission from the government for developments specially categorised as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project.

A statement from RiverOak read: "Eighteen months have elapsed since Manston was closed. During that time the airport has been stripped of its equipment and left derelict.

"At the same time demand for the facilities and services to be offered by a reinstated airport has increased significantly.

"RiverOak therefore takes the view that time is now of the essence and has today taken steps to notify the secretary of state at the department of communities and local government of its intention to submit an application for a DCO at the earliest possible date."

Should the company be successful, it aims to reopen the airport with a focus on freight transport, as well as training, whilst aiming to support London airports.

North Thanet MP Sir Roger Gale has come out in support of the latest proposal from the company.

He said: "If the application is granted, as it properly must be, then this will remove the future of Manston from the control of Thanet District Council while facilitating the full public consultation process and examination of the company's credentials and resources that they have been seeking for so long."

"The procedure will take time but, in competent hands and given a fair wind, there is the real possibility of planes flying from Manston again by the early part of 2017."

Chairman of Save Manston Airport Dr Beau Webber also welcomed the news.

He said: "We're very pleased, we've been inspecting the paperwork closely, it looks like we've got good progress going forward.

"We're pleased to see that things are progressing after 18 months of time wasting by Thanet District Council."

Thanet District Council refused to comment at this time.

The DCO process is expected to take around 18 months.



HOPE: Local campaign group leader Dr Beau Webber (left) and MP Sir Roger Gale (right) have both shown their support for RiverOak's renewed interest in Manston Airport



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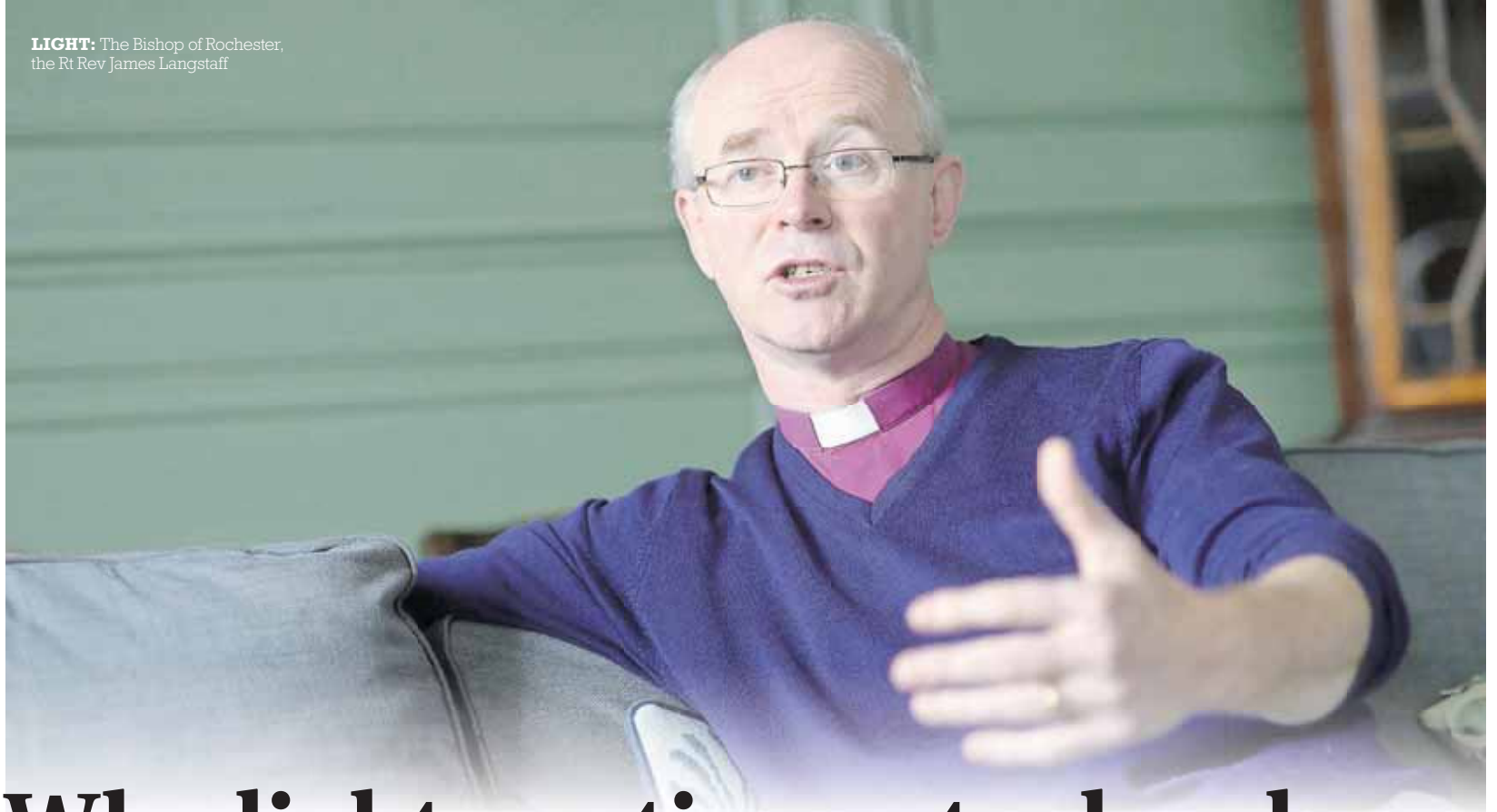
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LIGHT: The Bishop of Rochester, the Rt Rev James Langstaff



Why light continues to dazzle us despite the dark ominous clouds

The Bishop of Rochester, the Rt Rev James Langstaff writes for KoS in a special Christmas message

A LONG with those showing trees, animals and baubles, you will hopefully receive some Christmas cards which show you a picture of the Christ-child in the manger.

The picture on some of those cards may well be a reproduction of a historic painting – it is a scene which has attracted artists down the centuries.

Often a feature of those paintings is the use of light. The surrounds may well be dark, but light shines on the child; or sometimes light seems to shine out of the child's face.

And of course that theme of Jesus as the bringer of light, and whose birth is surrounded with angelic light, is one which we find in our Christmas readings and carols as well.

In John's Gospel, we read of 'light shining in the darkness': 'Light of light', we sing in a well-known carol.

In recent weeks we have seen and heard of a lot that does not seem to be about light.

The bombings and shootings in Paris stand out, but we have also had shootings in the United States (from different apparent motivations), and continued bloodshed in Syria and other places.

Unexpected and even random death and injury is very much part of our vocabulary, and a cause of

anxiety for many. The sad and sorry flow of migrants continues to be a feature of life, most especially in Greece.

And behind that of course, the tragic reality of people uprooted from home, family, livelihood and history as a result of conflict.

In Paris, leaders of nations have met to consider the care and future of our planet, especially its climate. In international sport, allegations of malpractice and corruption have continued to emerge, with prominent figures under criminal investigation.

Within our own society, many of us are aware that street homelessness in our nation seems to be on the increase in many of our cities and towns. Our prison population continues to be high, not least as a result of those convicted for historic sex crimes. Despite some green shoots in the economy, many continue to face pressures, including those reliant on bank interest for income.

In my national role as bishop to HM Prisons, I have visited a number of our prisons in recent months.

That is a part of our national life where there are huge pressures and challenges, where it may seem that there is not a lot of light.

But strangely, I come away from many of these visits with a sense of hope. That is not to say that I don't see and hear much that is disturbing,

“Any of us can and should reflect God's light on the world. As we look into the face of the Christ-child may we carry his light for those around us.”

Rt Rev James Langstaff,
Bishop of Rochester

distressing and unpleasant – I do. But I also see lives being turned around, habits of criminality being overturned, people facing up to the consequences of things they have done.

In one prison, a person serving a long sentence for a serious crime, who now has a new focus and attitude as a result of education and skills-training received in prison. Offenders in other prisons, given the opportunity to face up to their crimes by meeting and hearing from those who are the victims of crime – sometimes even the victims of their own crime.

In a prison for women, inspirational commitment and care from staff and volunteers seeking to make

change possible for some of the most damaged and vulnerable people in our criminal justice system. Alongside a prison for young offenders, a tiny charity seeking to support young people on release through linking them with mentors in the place to which they will return on release.

Around and in our prisons, there are individuals, projects and charities who are bringers of light – among them are governors, officers, chaplains, volunteers, visitors, teachers, healthcare staff and many others.

While many will not be, a good number of these are people motivated by their faith to be engaged in this work – indeed generous, life-giving and healing engagement with offenders is one of the unsung good news stories of the churches' contribution to the well-being of our society.

I am patron of one small charity which seeks to remove barriers to employment for former offenders; and another which supports those who are imprisoned abroad and their families back here. All of this work is demanding, sometimes dispiriting, and often done on a shoe-string. But it changes lives for offenders, victims and society more widely. It is light-bringing.

In recent months, I have also discovered light in a place where, if I am honest, I was probably not expecting to find it.

There is a quiet shift going on in the language and tone being used by government in relation to prisons.

The secretary of state for justice, while not being soft on offending, is openly using the language of redemption in relation to what goes on in prisons. He is stating clearly that prison needs to be about rebuilding and changing lives, not least through education; thereby, he asserts, crime is in the long-term reduced and our communities are safer. It is a very interesting time to be bishop to Prisons.

I have used one example from my own work to show that, despite the public perception often received, there is light to be found even in really challenging circumstances. And that light is carried by people individually and together – people who care, who are passionate about justice, who have hope for other people, believing that they can change. And any of us can be such people.

For most of us it will not be in prisons (though for some it may be), but perhaps in our family or neighbourhood, our workplace, school or college.

Any of us, and especially those of us who call ourselves Christian, can and should reflect God's light in the world. As we look into the face of the Christ-child afresh at Christmas, may we carry his light for those around us.

Recalling past while preparing for future

The Lord Lieutenant of Kent looks back at commemorations marking the 200th anniversary of victory at Waterloo and the royal opening of the Battle of Britain Memorial's visitor centre...

The Viscount De L'Isle MBE
Lord Lieutenant of Kent

AS this year draws to its close we can look back on the commemorations we held in June to mark the 200th anniversary of the allied victory at Waterloo, which ended the long years of the Napoleonic wars and heralded the beginning of the shape of a united Europe we see today.

The New Waterloo Dispatch landed on the beach at Broadstairs on June 20 where the original dispatch was brought 200 years before by HMS Peruvian, Captain White RN in command, which was represented by HMS Northumberland commanded by Commander Trish Kohn.

The Mayor of Broadstairs and St Peters, Cllr Rosalind Binks, met the actors interpreting the roles of Major Percy ADC to the Duke of Wellington and Captain White.

The dispatch made all haste to-

wards London in a Post-chaise. It arrived in the Precincts of Canterbury Cathedral at the conclusion of a Thanksgiving Service for the victory attended by The Duke of Kent, whose regiment the Scots Greys captured the golden eagle standards from the French Legions.

From Canterbury the dispatch went straight to London for further commemorations in St James's Square, which is where the Prince Regent received the dispatch and golden eagles in 1815.

Kent was extremely fortunate to have a visit from The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh in March when they visited The Battle of Britain Memorial to open the new visitor centre building in the shape of a Spitfire wing.

The visitor centre has proved especially popular with visitors to Capel-Le Ferne. While the weather was most unkind during the visit, it was a different story when The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh arrived in Canterbury to attend a short service follow-

ing which The Queen unveiled statues of herself and Prince Philip on the West End of the Cathedral.

The statues match those of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, the only other Queen to have celebrated a Diamond Jubilee, a fitting moment for both statues to be placed there, for on September 9, The Queen overtook Queen Victoria as the longest serving British Monarch.

The Queen typically felt the date was not one for great celebrations, but rather wishes to mark her 90th Birthday on April 21, 2016, with a number of events to be held in the summer. First is the Royal Windsor Horse Show at www.rwhs.co.uk. On Friday, June 10, there will be a National Service of Thanksgiving held at St Paul's Cathedral, and on the following day The Queen's Birthday Parade (Trooping the Colour) will be held on Horse Guards Parade.

On Sunday, June 12, The Queen will attend The Patron's Lunch in the Mall, a celebration of Her Majesty's patronage of over 600 organisations



LORD LIEUTENANT OF KENT: The Viscount De L'Isle MBE

in the UK and around the Commonwealth since 1952. (See www.thepatronslunch.com)

On this Sunday it is hoped that all local communities across Kent will hold street parties or village gatherings to help Her Majesty celebrate this landmark birthday in great style.

The local authorities are giving thought in how they might support events, but it is very much about working as a team like we did for the

Big Lunch in June 2012, when all communities came together in arranging an event.

We live with the daily threat of terrorism coming to our shores, let us remember those in the Armed Forces who will be away from home during the Christmas period and pray for their safe return to their loved ones.

I would like to wish all the readers of Kent on Sunday a Happy Christmas and much joy in 2016.

Merry Medway eyes the future

It has been another 12 months of progress in the booming Medway towns as area continues to build a fresh-faced future with its roots firmly in its engineering heritage. For **Alan Jarrett**, it was the year he took over as leader. He shares his reflections of 2015 in a special article just for Kent on Sunday...

By Alan Jarrett
Leader of Medway Council

WITH the Christmas season now upon us and the new year drawing near, this is a good opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved throughout 2015.

It's been a challenging year as we've faced further funding cuts, but this is something we have had to adapt to over past years and something we will continue to deal with in the future.

It's about coming up with more creative ways to save money while ensuring vital front line services are protected for local people.

We recently heard the news announced by the chancellor of the exchequer in his autumn statement that Rochester Airport has been granted Enterprise Zone status as a result of a joint north Kent bid.

I am delighted that Rochester Airport is set to form part of the new

North Kent Enterprise Zone.

We now have the opportunity to attract more high-tech businesses into Medway and capitalise on the excellent location Rochester Airport provides, working alongside BAE and the University of Greenwich.

Not only will we now look at the creation of up to 1,000 jobs, we have the chance to establish Medway as a centre of excellence for engineering, innovation and technology. Medway will become an economic location of real significance.

Earlier this month, Ofsted released a report on children's care services in Medway following a month-long inspection in September. The report confirmed that improvements are being made.

This progress is thanks to our hard working staff and we will continue to strive to get better over the coming years. There is still a way to go, but the improvement programme for children's services is very much in place and we are moving in a positive direction.

We also launched Get Medway



READY: Alan Jarrett

Learning in October, a campaign set to raise the bar in local schools, en-

couraging a love of learning among youngsters and getting even more outstanding teachers and enthusiastic school governors into Medway schools.

Another highlight has to be the boost to our extensive regeneration plans as we received significant external capital funding secured from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

This will assist with our exciting regeneration projects here in Medway which include Rochester Riverside and Chatham Waters.

We have come some way in the development of community hubs this year, with the successful move of the library in Strood to the new Strood Community Hub – which is in a more central location on the High Street in a refurbished and vibrant building.

Strood Community Hub has been going strong since March and is continuing to grow in popularity as more and more people take advantage of the wide range of council services on offer there.

Another hub opened in Hempstead

last month, offering new services and opening its doors for an extra four hours a week.

Medway was showcased around the world during the Rugby World Cup this summer, as Rochester Castle featured in the opening titles for the ITV coverage.

The programmes were aired worldwide almost every day for a few months, and therefore millions of people will have got a glimpse of one of Medway's most iconic attractions.

Once again, residents and visitors alike have been entertained this year with the numerous events and festivals run by the council.

Hundreds of thousands of people enjoy the events which include the Dickens Festival, Dickensian Christmas, the River Festival, Castle Concerts and most recently the Christmas lights switch-on events in our town centres.

There are many more highlights I could mention, but those are just a few that have made 2015 a success.

I would like to wish everyone in Medway a happy New Year.



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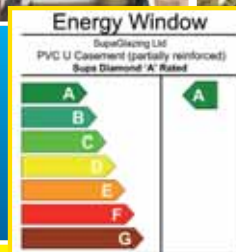
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Under pressure: How goats left submarines for field of dreams

When the Ministry of Defence rang an animal sanctuary several years ago it had an unusual request; to unload 150 goats it had been using for testing. It brought to an end their suffering and saw them again frolic in the open air

By Adrian Puzo

editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

WHEN Robert Critch received a phone call out of the blue from the Ministry of Defence, to say he was surprised with what they wanted was something of an understatement.

Along with his wife Valerie, he has run the Buttercups Sanctuary in Boughton Monchelsea, close to Maidstone.

It has long provided a refuge for goats who have been abandoned or were once pets. But this call would trump all others.

Explains Mr Critch: "It was some years ago when they rang asking whether we could possibly take 32 goats into care.

"It was completely out of the blue. I took a very deep breath, and made a frantic calculation as to where we could put them all, and said yes.

"The MoD had for years been using goats for experiments on submarine rescue, and over two hundred died during these experiments. Eventually they decided to cease this draconian procedure, so we arranged for the goats to be delivered to us in two batches."

According to campaign group Animal Aid, based in Tonbridge, the testing they had been put through had been tough.

A spokesman for the organisation explained: "The MoD commissioned a company called QinetiQ to conduct these tests which involved placing goats into hyperbaric chambers, where the pressure was increased or decreased to extreme levels, in order to simulate an emergency aboard a submarine.

"The goats suffered excruciating pain and the collapse of vital organs, as well as extreme fear and stress. It is believed that several hundred goats were used over 10 years, and that those who survived the experiments were killed and dissected."

When details of the testing leaked out, the MoD came under pressure to stop the testing after MPs and the Southern Animal Rights Coalition demanded it stop.

And that led, in 2008, to the MoD announcing "the end of its immediate requirement for testing on live goats as part of its hyperbaric research in support of the MoD's Submarine Escape Rescue and Abandonment System (SMERAS)... the review has concluded that the remaining associated areas of uncertain-

ty in submarine escape and rescue relate to events that are considered highly unlikely, and do not therefore need to be addressed by means of animal testing".

The issue then was just what to do with the goats which survived.

Enter Buttercups Sanctuary.

"They were mostly of the Saanen breed, large white goats," says Mr Critch. "They settled into their new home very quickly and over the next few months they were all rehomed in their family groups into wonderful foster homes in and around Kent. But as sometimes happens through unforeseen circumstances, two groups of four came back to the sanctuary.

"Rather than putting them through the upheaval of being re-homed again, it was decided to keep them at Buttercups, where they could make friends with our other 150 goats, and where we could keep a closer eye on their welfare."

One of these goats - Rhubarb - has become a firm favourite, his personality demonstrating the intelligence and playful nature of these creatures.

Mr Critch says: "As time passed, Rhubarb, one of the largest male goats - yes, we also had his brother, Custard - started to develop a serious deformity of his front legs, both legs bowing outwards very visibly at the knee. When Rhubarb thinks anyone is looking, he hobbles like an old man with all the troubles of the world on his shoulders, and is unable to move at all fast. He does rather play on the situation, and consequently gets much sympathy and attention from all and sundry.

"Normally, the outer horn on a goat's feet will wear down walking on a hard surface, but because he is unable to put pressure on the soles of his feet, Rhubarb's horns grow sideways, creating an even greater deformity. For this reason he needs very frequent attention to the trimming of his feet.

"As soon as he is approached with a collar and lead to have his pedicure, his head goes down, his limp grows much worse, and he digs his feet in stubbornly and refuses to move.

"However, Rhubarb is not stupid. When he is left locked in his pen in the morning, awaiting treatment, he has been seen - when he thinks no one is looking - jumping over the stable door to freedom. On other occasions, when we throw chopped vegetables out into the field for the goats, it is surprising how



SALVATION: Robert Critch, above in green, has helped goats find a new life - including Rhubarb and his dodgy legs, as pictured right.

quickly his disability vanishes as he races to the head of the crowd to get to the goodies first."

Rhubarb is just one of the many goats who has benefitted from life at Buttercups. Other familiar faces include Salt - a pygmy goat with three legs who was rescued after he was at-

tacked by a wild boar, and Ivan - who came to the sanctuary after he was abandoned when his former owner sold his land, leaving the animal to fend for himself.

Mr Critch says: "We find so often that people treat animals as though they were mere commod-

ities and not as fellow creatures with feelings."

This compassion was recognised by the mayor of Maidstone, who presented Mr and Mrs Critch with a plaque during the sanctuary's 25th anniversary celebrations last year.

Other visiting dignitaries include Ann Wid-

combe, former MP for Maidstone, who is the patron of Buttercups. She has adopted two resident goats - Natalie and Nadia - who she came to see this summer.

According to Mr Critch, it would not be possible to run the sanctuary without the help of many volunteers.

Continued on Page 16



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REVIVED: The goats at the sanctuary get to enjoy the good life in the Kent countryside

Continued from Page 15

He says: "They help keep the yard clean after 150 goats have tramped all over it the day before. They attend to the comfort of the goats' bedtime space, chop vegetables, wash bowls, together with other small tasks that help with the goats' welfare.

"Most importantly, they spend time talking to the goats and loving them. It makes such a difference if the goats

have been left alone and frightened in their previous lives. We have helping us at present in the region of sixty or so volunteers but are always hoping to have more."

■ The sanctuary is always on the lookout for volunteers - if you live locally and have a morning spare to help, contact Buttercups for more information. See www.buttercups.org.uk.

If you would like to support a goat, but don't have the facilities, you can become a goat 'guardian'. You will become the sole supporter of your chosen animal, who you can visit on open days and by arrangement, and even take for walks in the surrounding woodland.

You can also distance-adopt a goat, or foster if you do have the appropriate facilities.

ANIMAL TESTING AND THE MOD

STATISTICS released by the Home Office earlier this year reveal 3.87 million procedures were carried out on live animals in 2014.

Of these, half related to the creation/breeding of genetically altered animals that were not used in further procedures and the other half were experimental procedures.

It is not known exactly how many of these procedures were carried out by the MoD, but the number of animals used by the organisation each year is thought to be almost 30,000 – a number on the rise.

Animal Aid claims: "The number of animals used in weapons research in British laboratories quadrupled between 1997 and 2007, from 4,500 to more than 18,000."

Claire Palmer is a spokeswoman for the Animal Justice Project, a campaign group which has carried out research into this testing. She said: "Pigs being forced to inhale toxic mustard gas, macaque monkeys injected with vaccines, marmosets infected with bio-threat diseases, battlefield wounds inflicted on rabbits, rats having their eyes blasted with projectiles, mice having their eyes burnt with lasers, guinea pigs forced to inhale nerve gas: these are just some of the shocking experiments carried out in the UK."

While a number of these tests are outlawed, the MoD has special exemption status.

Those against the testing claim it is inhumane and ineffective, repeating tests that have already been done. But others claim it is necessary.

An organisation called Understanding Animal Research, which 'aims to achieve broad understanding and acceptance of the humane use of animals in biomedical research in the UK, to advance science and medicine' has supported the MoD's use of animals in testing, saying: "Experiments undertaken for military purposes are designed to support and protect our troops in dangerous situations, or to prepare for the potential scenario of chemical or biological attacks on civilians. The law is clear that animals cannot be used if there is any other way of conducting the experiment."

A statement released by the MoD said: "The research we undertake saves lives. Countering the threat posed by chemical and biological weapons and improving the treatment of casualties on the battlefield cannot currently be achieved without the use of animals. However, we are increasingly using computer modelling and cell cultures to reduce the need for testing on animals. We are committed to increasing these."

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BUSY: Operation Stack, the Scenic Railway at Dreamland, Manston Airport, a huge fire in Canterbury city centre and, of course, the general election in May, were the defining issues of 2015 in the county as we take a look back over a year packed full of incident and discussion points.



Rollercoaster year as Stack dominated

REVIEW OF THE YEAR: Chris Britcher takes a look back over the last 12 months in our county to remember some of the key events which shaped yet another eventful year...

FOR the wider world, 2015 will be forever associated with the rise of death cult IS, the conflict in Syria and, a little closer to home, the remarkable triumph of the Conservatives in the general election.

And in Kent the impact of the global scene continues to resonate.

The hundreds of thousands fleeing war-torn Syria in search of refuge in Europe has seen our borders under closer scrutiny than ever before.

Our proximity to the continent has seen Kent in the front line from everything from increased security to a constant battle against those desperate souls prepared to risk life and limb in pursuit of what they perceive as the good life offered in our country.

A consequence of this has fuelled the remarkable rise of Ukup under Westerham's Nigel Farage.

While his talismanic appeal has certainly waned this year amid bitter infighting, his party continues to perform well in elections and with the possibility of an EU referendum in 2016, they are far from a spent force.

It will surely no doubt look to consolidate next year as it makes the transition from protest vote winner to genuine political heavyweights.

Certainly the local elections in May will be a great opportunity to see if they are on the right track. They'll be equally important for Labour as it stumbles forward with the divisive figure of Jeremy Corbyn at its helm. As for the Liberal Democrats, they are fighting for their political relevance. Another poor showing and it's hard to see a way back for them for a generation.

At that same election in May we'll also get the chance to elect our next police and crime commissioner. It's hard to see how Ann Barnes can retain the position even if she does decide to stand again. The cynics might suggest an announcement on her decision not to stand will be made during the festive season when we're all busy.

But the one thing we can be sure of is that 2016 will not be dull by any stretch of the imagination. Just read the following pages and you'll remember what a rollercoaster 2015 has been.

January

LONDON Paramount Resort would be one of those stories that never strayed from the headlines during the year and as the year opened it confirmed it had agreed the deal for the land on the Swanscombe peninsula where it would build its £2bn pleasure palace.

If all went to plan it would be open by Easter 2020.

In another on-going saga on the other side of the county, Thanet District Council's overview and scrutiny committee confirmed it would be looking at the decision of the Labour leadership not to pursue a compulsory purchase order on the site of Manston Airport.

There was a tragic end to the bid to find Pat Lamb, 28, (right) from Greenhithe, who had gone missing in December after a night out with friends in Maidstone, when his body was found in the River

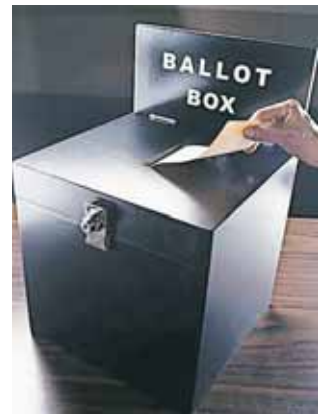
Medway several weeks later.

In industry, MyFerryLink continued to fight for survival following a competition ruling it had to end due to owners Eurotunnel having too tight a grip on the competitive Dover to Calais route. Meanwhile a fire in the tunnel forces Operation Stack to make the first of its many appearances this year.

With the general election now on the horizon, comic Al Murray announced his alter ego The Pub Landlord was going to stand in South Thanet against Ukup leader Nigel Farage.

While Hugh Robertson, MP for Faversham and Mid Kent revealed he would stand down in May.

Those behind Ramsgate's Marlowe Academy insisted its future was secure despite poor results and a drop in admission and Blantyre House jail closed.



Review of the Year 2015

KENT on Sunday has continued throughout 2015 to provide you with an unrivalled overview of all the key stories which impact on this wonderful county of ours.

And there can be little denying that the politics of the year have provided so much fascination.



From the rise of Ukip, where Kent seems to be particularly receptive to its message, to the collapse of the Labour vote under Ed Miliband, we have seen such

significant shifts in the way we align ourselves to the main parties.

But the biggest impact of all has surely been the relentless cuts we have seen in public spending which really had a significant impact.

After such an initial tough five years under the coalition, the fact the Tories were so convincingly returned to power suggests we understand it is a necessity to balance the books.



February

DAVID Cameron vows an urgent review into Operation Stack after last month's implementation while in Medway the council gives the nod for the £4.4m development of Rochester Airport, despite local opposition.

In Dartford, a plaque is unveiled on Dartford railway station to mark where Mick Jagger and Keith Richards met before the creation of the Rolling Stones.

Herne Bay's Sandi Toksvig got a taste of things to come when she hosted a special edition of TV show QI at the University of Kent to mark its 50th anniversaries.

A former student at the uni, EL James, made more millions this month when a big screen version of romp-fest 50 Shades of Grey was released in time for Valentine's Day.

The Marlowe Academy reveals it is in talks with government

education chiefs over its future while the Oasis Academy in Hextable, near Sevenoaks, confirms it is to close due to dropping numbers.

The PM does, however, lend his support to a bid to open a grammar school in Sevenoaks.

The Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS trust is deemed to 'require improvement' by the Care Quality Commission; Medway is 'inadequate' again, prompting concerns over the county's health provision.

Kent County Council paints a gloomy vision of the future with a budget cut of £81m costing some 400 jobs.

Meanwhile, Alison Rigby, 35, a lab technician at a school in Beckenham is named on the shortlist for a one-way trip to Mars in a bid to colonise it.



March

LYDDEN race track hosted the Top Gear stars in what no one could foresee was the final show before the Jeremy Clarkson 'fracas' would lead to all three being out of a job.

Also on the way out was the Marlowe Academy which finally waved a little white flag and said it was to close and be taken over by nearby Ellington and Hereson.

Bringing a little glamour to the Turner Contemporary was a heavily pregnant Duchess of Cambridge, who made one of her final appearances before giving birth to Princess Charlotte.

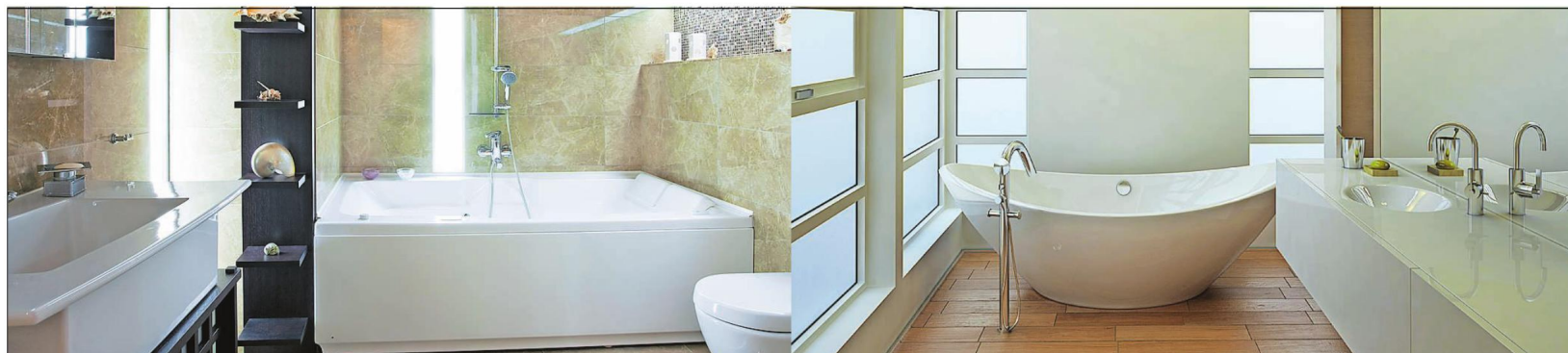
Two weeks later, the Queen came down to open The Wing at the Battle of Britain Memorial at

Capel le Ferne despite gloomy skies.

Two months before the election and Ukip's Folkestone candidate Janice Atkinson is ultimately kicked out of the party after a row over an expense claim run up at a hotel in Margate. She's replaced by Harriet Yeo who defected from Labour.

In the skies we have a smog cloud drift in from the continent along with a health warning, while a rare solar eclipse was ruined for most in Kent by dense cloud.

Queues stretched around the block for another of the year's big stories as tickets for the re-opening of the new-look Dreamland went on sale ahead of its June opening.



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April

WITH the general election just a month away, the big focus was on South Thanet where the Tories rolled out the big guns in a bid to prevent Nigel Farage emerging triumphant.

Boris Johnson, Theresa May, William Hague and Iain Duncan Smith were among the big names to hit the streets in support of Craig Mackinlay (right).

Manston is the big political hot potato and that's only fuelled when the new owners unveil big plans for the site... but not for aeroplanes.

The PM and his wife were in Gravesend for the Vaisakhi Sikh festival with all the polls pointing to a hung parliament.

Mark Reckless, who forced a by-election and won in Rochester for Ukip in 2014, is also facing a tough fight.

Chatham's Buckmore Park karting circuit is taken over by race legend John Surtees who announces plans to make it an even bigger success.

There are tough new checks introduced at Dover to tighten up on immigration prompting concerns of big delays. But they don't materialise.

In Calais there are grumblings over the opening of a new migrant camp amid concerns it could become another Sangatte. Little do they know what lies around the corner.

There is a devastating earthquake in Nepal which claims the lives of thousands of people and sparks a



major humanitarian appeal.

Among the dead is Matt Carapiet, 23, from Bearsted. He had been trekking near the capital Kathmandu two days before the disaster and was not heard of again.

Sandi Toksvig was in the headlines again; this time confirming she was quitting as host of Radio 4's popular News Quiz in order to launch her own political party – the Women's Equality Party – which is likely to field a number of candidates in next year's local elections.

A beach hut in Whitstable goes on the market for an eye-watering £120,000 – and you're not even allowed to sleep in it, while the hype around the Paramount development in Swanscombe steps up a gear when a host of artist's impression are released of how the park will look when completed.

May

POLLSTERS lost almost as much face as Labour's Ed Miliband when the result of the general election was a resounding success for the Tories.

Every Kent seat went blue, as Mark Reckless crashed out for Ukip in Rochester and Nigel Farage failed, narrowly, to win South Thanet. He then carried out a pre-election promise to resign... only to take over again a few weeks later.

He shouldn't have felt too bad though – his party polled millions of votes by emerging with just one MP, prompting further debate on our electoral system.

Local councils, which were also up for grabs, saw Labour lose control on Gravesham and Ukip, sensationally, win its first council in, you guessed it, Thanet, riding on a 'we'll re-open Manston ticket'.

Leader Chris Wells declaring it intended to run a "boring council". Oops.

Amid the political earthquake, there was a real tremor felt in the early hours of the morning across east Kent, which woke many to find their homes shaking. The epicentre of the 4.2 on the Richter Scale quake was off the coast of Sandwich.



June

MYFERRYLINK's closure prompted French ferry workers to strike resulting in Operation Stack making an unwelcome return.

Dreamland made national headlines as it re-opened, but without main attraction the Scenic Railway.

Police and crime commissioner Ann Barnes finally confirmed she was to scrap the youth commissioner job.

Liberal Democrat leader on KCC, Trudy Dean, paid tribute to former Lib Dem leader Charles Kennedy whose

sudden death shocked the country.

EastEnders stars spent several days in Broadstairs and Ramsgate to film scenes for the soap and there was a huge blaze in Maidstone town centre which prompted a major investigation and the sealing off of one of the town's busiest areas.

Meanwhile the touring Australian cricket team warmed up for the eagerly anticipated Ashes series against England with a match in Canterbury against Kent.



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Review of the Year 2015

July

ONE word sums up July and that was simply Stack.

While Kent stalled as the M20 was turned into a car park, the rest of the nation simply shrugged their shoulders. Until, of course, the school holidays began and everyone found themselves missing their ferries because of the congestion. Suddenly it shot up the national news agenda.

A perfect storm had developed as striking French workers occupied MyFerryLink boats, cross-Channel capacity was down as a result, and the migrants gathering in Calais looked to take advantage by stepping up attempts to get into the UK.

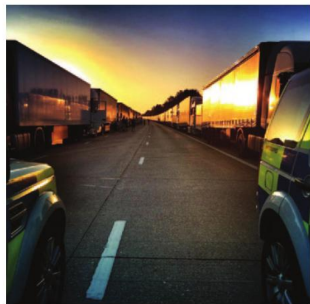
KCC also warned of pressure growing due the rise in the number of unaccompanied migrant children entering the county.

However, Kent is nothing if not resilient and 77,000 of us headed to the Kent Show in Detling for the annual celebration of the county.

Prince Charles avoided the traffic too when he headed to Folkestone to mark the 200th anniversary of the Gurkhas' service to the British Army.

There were a few raised eyebrows when a 10ft python called Zombie escaped his home in Larkfield, and they were raised even higher amid some rather sensational reports of a great white shark being spotted off the coast of Herne Bay. Nonsense, of course.

There was tragedy in the non-



league football world when young triallist Junior Dian collapsed and died while playing for Tonbridge Angels in a pre-season friendly.

We also bid farewell this month to former lord lieutenant Allan Willet who passed away. He was 79.

There as another major fire as a huge blaze on a red hot Saturday afternoon brought chaos to a new development along Canterbury's city walls. It caused thousands of pounds worth of damage but, remarkably, no one was injured.

Status Quo fans were left disappointed after Rick Parfitt was taken ill just hours before a show at Rochester Castle. They vowed to return in 2016.

But the legendary Adam Ant did show and played at Ashford's popular free Create Festival.

August

AS Operation Stack eased, perhaps the oddest 'solution' was proposed and accepted for the short term.

It involved diverting HGVs off the M20 and then leading them on a merry dance to Manston where they would be parked on the old airport site before being led down to Dover.

Just be thankful that has never been called on... yet.

The focus switched from the ferries to Eurotunnel which found itself facing daily challenges as migrants attempted to sneak into the tunnel.

Work began on a £2.65m overhaul

of Tonbridge High Street at the same time as Thanet District Council pushed ahead with plans to tie up a CPO with funding coming from US investment firm RiverOak.

Aldington's TV star Paul O'Grady paid a moving tribute to singer and Blind Date host Cilla Black who died suddenly while on holiday in Spain.

Biggin Hill was the focus for the 75th anniversary of the Hardest Day - a gruelling part of the Battle of Britain during the Second World War which cost so many lives but was instrumental in securing our skies.



September



LET's get the sagas out of the way first. London Paramount confirmed it was pushing its opening back to 2021 - two years later than originally proposed.

Thanet council realised serving up a CPO on Manston wasn't as easy as they thought. Cross Ukip councillors resigned as a result, and Ukip's majority hung by a thread as a result.

And finally striking French workers disembarked the MyFerryLink vessels so rival firm DFDS

could lease them out... but not before causing a reported '£2m' worth of damage.

There was tragedy in Leybourne Lakes as a competitor in a triathlon event, drowned during the swimming event. Paul Gallihawk (pictured), 34, was from Maidstone.

The parole board recommend M25 killer Kenneth Noye be moved to an open prison. And a consultation is launched into KCC's hugely controversial policy of switching off our street lights.

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October

CROWDS flocked to bid farewell to the Cold War bomber the Avro Vulcan as it flew above Kent on its farewell tour.

And it was a big hello to a grammar school annexe in Sevenoaks as campaigners finally got the go-ahead.

Councils big and small joined the police in voicing major concerns over what chancellor George Osborne would outline in November's spending review. The expectation was universal; the cuts were going to be deep.



There was some good news though – that missing 10ft python from Larkfield was found safe and well.

Ukip were hit by snakes as more resignations saw their TDC majority disappear. So much

for the hope of being a 'boring' council, eh?

Michael Gove blocks the Kenneth Noye (pictured) open prison move and the Scenic Railway finally opens in Margate as millions watch The Apprentice contestants running around the county.

November

THE terror attacks in Paris would cast a long shadow as our MPs were broadly supportive of calls that we should join airstrikes of IS' Syrian hide-outs.

The spending review a few days later brought a little better news as, against the odds, the cuts didn't seem quite so bad. 'The devil is in the detail' was a popular phrase used.

But there was £250m for a long-term solution to Stack and extra funding for the Ebbsfleet garden city.

Chatham MP Tracey Crouch revealed she had suffered a miscarriage during the general election - but is pregnant again and expecting in February.

EDF Energy splashed out £1.5m to buy Britain's 'only desert' – the Dungeness estate – the land which neighbours its nuclear power station while a judge through out an appeal bid by the killer of Greenhithe teenager Claire Tiltman, Colin Ash Smith.



December

THE company behind Dreamland revealed it was struggling under a £2.9m pile of debt putting its future in some doubt just six months after the doors opened.

MPs voted for bombing raids in Syria with just two Kent MPs - Gravesham's Adam Holloway and Sittingbourne's Gordon Henderson opting not to back the PM. Both spoke instead of a more holistic approach being required.

Rochester's long-awaited new railway station was finally opened, while there was more 'good' news for commuters as it was confirmed season tickets would rise by just one per cent in January - the lowest rise in years.

Bus drivers in Medway walked out on two one-day strikes in a row with bus firm Arriva - but kissed

and made up in time for Christmas.

Property tycoons Judith and Fergus Wilson confirmed they were on the verge of selling their 900-strong property portfolio to Middle East investors - the deal set to be concluded next month.

Meanwhile, a consultation process of a lorry park for Stack opens with two sites near junction 11 of the M20 identified as options.

And there is a little light relief at the end of the year as cinemas rake it in for the return of the celebrated Star Wars franchise as The Force Awakens reunites the original stars and thousands in Kent scuttle to the big screen to watch it.

The big question now is, after a snow-free 2015 (in the most part), will 2016 begin with a cold snap to test our transport networks?

KENT on Sunday prides itself on tackling some of the most important issues each and every week and we're proud of our output during 2015.

We put the spotlight back on the scandalous blood contamination issue which had such a profound impact on so many people in the county; so many of whom continue in the fight to have a sensible and deserved compensation package paid to them. KoS continues to fight their

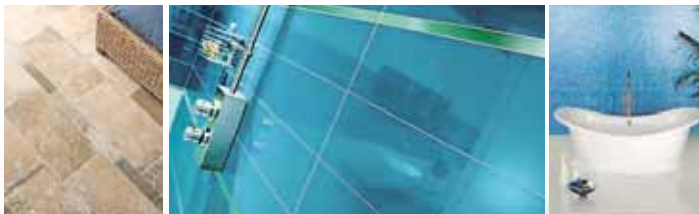
corner and believes it is time for a major change in the way the situation has been handled.

Elsewhere we have tackled everything from the impact on health of a cancer vaccine given to our schoolgirls, to the impact of leaving the EU on our rural sector and the impact of fracking on our countryside.

We vow to continue to keep up the good work during 2016.



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Summer of Stack's long shadow

In a special article written for KoS, Kent's police and crime commissioner **Ann Barnes** reflects on a year which had plenty of challenges as well as reminding us all how safe the county actually is...

THE last 12 months has been the year when victims and witnesses have been put very firmly at the centre of policing in the county, recorded crime has gone down in Kent (bucking the national trend), the misery of Operation Stack was once again inflicted on us and – surprise, surprise – the chancellor announced there were to be no more cuts to police funding.

Taken in the round, three out of four is not so bad!

First of all, great strides have been made in improving support services for victims of crime in our county this year and in June I was delighted to officially launch Compass House, the new victim and witness care and advice service for the county.

Located in Ashford, the centre brings together the charity Victim Support and Kent Police's Witness Care Unit to point victims and witnesses of crime in the direction of the help and support they need.

Both organisations actually started working there in April, and since then have had contact with more than 35,000 people – a truly staggering achievement.

This wonderful centre is the fruition of a vision which the chief con-



BENEFIT: Ann Barnes and the chief constable outside Compass House

stable and I share – quite simply, putting victims and witnesses at the

heart of everything. We are incredibly proud of it. An awful lot of hard

work was done by a lot of very dedicated people and we are very fortunate indeed to have such a facility here in Kent – one of the first of its kind in the country.

In fact, the chief executive of Victim Support tells me that Compass House is a blueprint for the delivery of victims' services – praise indeed!

This year also saw crime in Kent fall by 1.5 per cent – meaning, more importantly, that there are over 1,500 fewer victims in the county. Kent is absolutely a safe place to live in, but for those who do have the misfortune to become a victim of crime it is reassuring to know that first-class support is available.

I couldn't possibly reflect on the year gone by without mentioning the 'Summer of Stack'.

Weeks upon weeks of misery were felt on Kent's roads during Operation Stack this summer, when we saw our lovely county effectively turned into a giant lorry park. Our pleas for this to be recognised as a national problem were heard and I'm really pleased the chancellor recognised this in his autumn statement, pledging a £250 million investment to alleviate the problems Stack causes.

I was, of course, also pleased by

the chancellor's announcement that there were to be no further cuts to the national policing budget, but, as ever, the devil was in the detail.

Looking ahead, however, we will not stop our efficiency drive to give better value for money for Kent taxpayers and to build an innovative, digitally enabled, modern policing service fit for the 21st century.

The investment in body worn video cameras for Kent Police officers, which have now been rolled-out countywide, is just one of the ways we're doing this. The commitment to innovation will continue in 2016.

Finally, despite the drastic cuts to funding that Kent Police has faced since 2011 – when a fifth of the workforce has left and not been replaced – officers and staff have worked tirelessly to maintain and improve the first class service they provide to the people of Kent.

Time and again I am impressed by their dedication and professionalism, and I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to each and every one of them, as so often the excellent work of police officers and staff goes without comment.

Last but not least, I'd like to wish everyone in Kent a happy New Year and a safe 2016.



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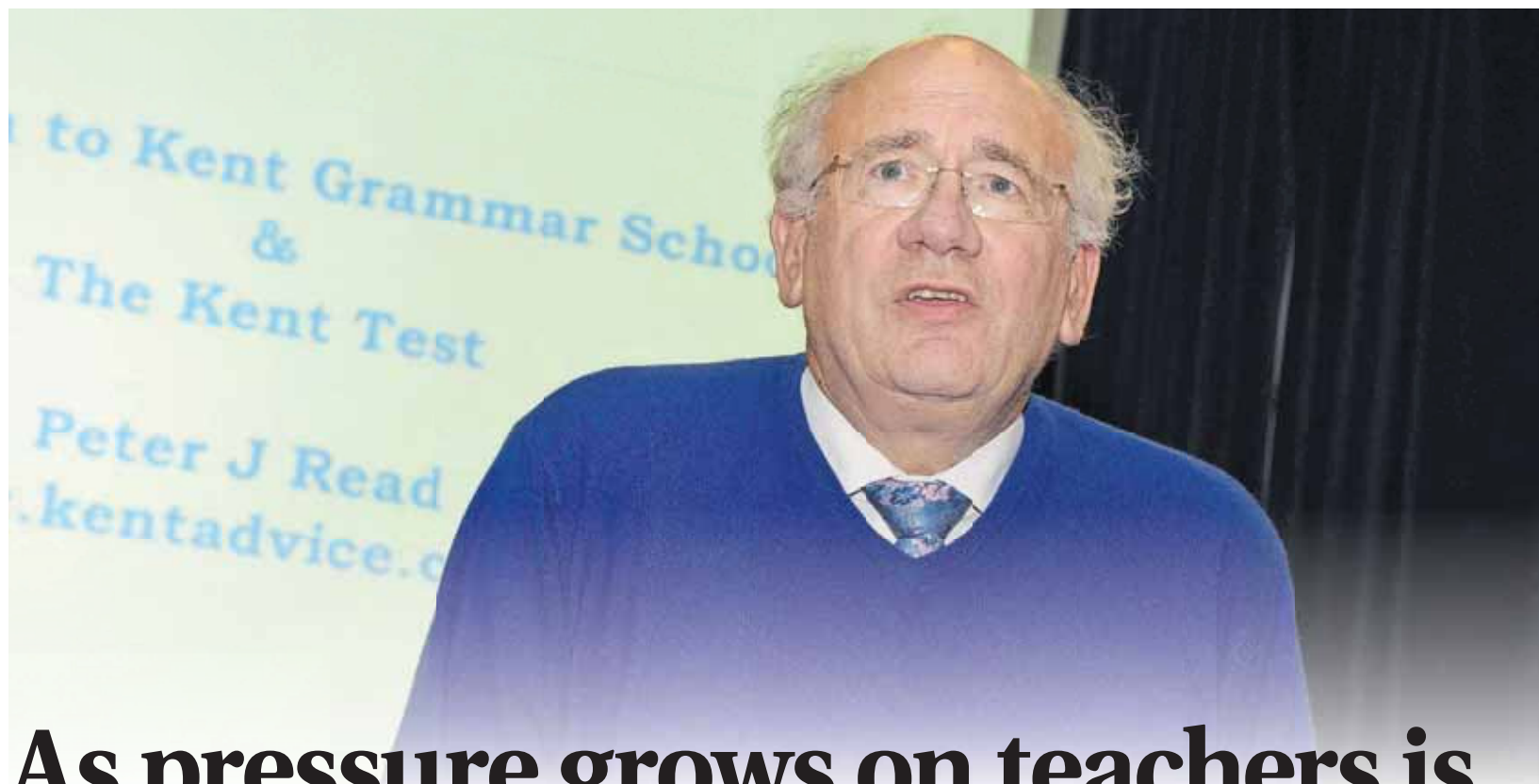
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As pressure grows on teachers is 2016 going to provide any relief?

Probably not, according to former head teacher and education adviser **Peter Read** in his year report

THE key themes of 2015 across Kent and Medway are the pressure on school places, the inexorable drive for higher examination performance, and the frightening increase in turnover of teachers and headteachers – all certain to remain amongst the major stories in coming years.

Pupil numbers are rising sharply, with the recent increase in primary demand now about to hit Kent secondary schools, whilst several in Medway struggle at the end of a sharp fall in numbers.

A new six form entry secondary school in Maidstone has been approved for 2017, with many popular schools expanding.

Against this are set the sudden closure of Oasis Hextable Academy, the long anticipated demise of Marlowe Academy, Ramsgate, and the consultation about the surely inevitable closure of Pent Valley School in Folkestone, all in 2015.

As with Chaucer Technology College in Canterbury, which closed last year, the plan is to mothball the Pent Valley site until demand for places leads to a new school being built in 2018.

Two new 14-19 university technology schools have opened in the past two years, one in Dartford, the other in Chatham.

An increasing proportion of Kent children now transfer to grammar schools, currently running at 30 per cent of the population (29 per cent in Medway), which has a negative im-

pact on the non-selective schools.

In addition, government pressure is forcing these schools to adopt a more academic curriculum, unsuitable for too many children, producing what government regards as an unacceptable fall in their examination performance, with the number of Kent schools failing to reach 30 per cent A-C grades at GCSE nearly doubling to 15 in the past year.

St George's CofE, Broadstairs, is about to become an all through 4-19 school, joining Folkestone Academy, John Wallis School in Ashford, and Hundred of Hoo School in Medway.

Chatham Grammar School for Boys is controversially proposing to go mixed from September and to admit children on assessment by a governors' committee if it has places vacant after normal allocation.

The biggest pressures in primary schools come in urban areas, with no vacant spaces at all in reception classes on allocation last April in urban Dartford, Folkestone and Sevenoaks schools and just two per cent in Ashford, Gravesham, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells.

In terms of quality of education, Kent and Medway are heading in different directions in terms of primary school performance, with Medway Council clearly not fit for purpose, being the worst authority in the country in both Ofsted outcomes and test performance in 2015, underlining a situation that has run for far too many years.

Kent, which shared poor performance a few years ago, has now im-

proved following tough action by KCC and is now producing results at the national average, although could still do better, as shown by secondary pupils in both authorities who continue to perform well above the national average at GCSE.

However, the intense pressure to improve standards has more than its fair share of casualties, with five of the headteachers of Kent's 18 coastal non-selective schools losing their jobs this year, four in 2014, another three at risk and two schools closing, mainly because of poor results.

A high number of primary headteachers have also lost their jobs in the drive for higher standards.

Headteachers' posts advertised are attracting fewer and fewer applicants as it has become a high risk job in many areas.

We not only have a serious shortage of good applicants coming forward for all teaching posts, but the turnover of classroom teachers, citing overwork, pressure from above, bullying, and lack of appropriate training and support in some schools, together with lack of respect for the profession, is frightening, with four in ten newly qualified teachers leaving the profession in their first year.

In some primary schools as many as half the staff left at the end of the summer, so it was pleasing to see the main leader article in Kent on Sunday earlier this month highlighting these vital issues.

Inevitably, the selective system has featured, the proposed Sevenoaks grammar school annex still waiting,

at the time of writing, to see if a legal challenge is forthcoming.

For what it is worth, I think the proposal will go ahead, creating up to another 120 girls' grammar school places in west Kent. This still leaves a growing shortage of boys' grammar school places over the next few years in west Kent, although many grammar schools have expanded their intake to meet demand.

It is good to see Kent's most selective school, The Judd in Tonbridge, changing its admission rules to give priority for 85 per cent of its places to local boys, the two Wilmington grammars having been down this route for 2015 easing the pressure on places for local children.

There are increasing demands to widen social access to grammar school places, and KCC is setting up a select committee to explore ways forward.

The biggest success story in Kent is surely its special school sector, with nearly half of all schools currently graded 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. The only blot on this landscape was KCC's mismanagement of Furness School, catering for children with high level autism, leading to a very public failed attempt to shut down the provision.

Kent and Medway now have eight new free schools between them, with two more to come in the next two years and, in contrast to some other parts of the country, these are generally proving to be a success story adding to the level of quality provision.

Government wants all schools converted to academy status by 2020, in

spite of the limited evidence that academisation improves standards.

Currently, 81 per cent of Kent secondary schools are or in the process of conversion, with 32 per cent of primaries.

For Medway, the figures are 88 per cent and 38 per cent.

Over half of the 23 Kent primary schools who failed to reach the government floor standard at Key Stage 2 this summer are academies, many of which have had a troubled time since their change in status, with three being forced to change sponsors after failure by their original ones.

This is a part of the 'game' of academy monopoly, as too many trusts seek to emulate successful businesses in their dealings with schools, effectively engaging in takeovers, mergers and transfers as reported on my website.

Three academies: Astor College in Dover; Chantry Primary in Gravesend, and Oasis Skinner Street Primary in Medway have all received heavy warning letters from government in the last year about their poor performance, the last two having been threatened with closure if they do not improve.

What is certain is that the education map is changing faster than at any time I can remember in my 40 years of working in the county, with government more firmly in the driving seat than ever before. I see no sign of relaxation of this centralised and politicised grip in the near future, so hang on for another bumpy ride in 2016.

■ You can read more from Peter Read on his website www.kentadvice.co.uk.

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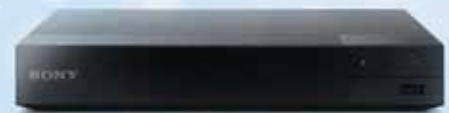
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Images define the last 12 months

They say a picture says a thousand words... so here are some of the most striking which we have been published in KoS during 2015 capturing some of the biggest news stories which impacted on Kent...



DOWN BUT NOT OUT: An exhausted Nigel Farage on the morning of the general election result confirming he was to step down (but was back within weeks). Pic: ADY KERRY



READY FOR ACTION: We sent our reporter Jamie Weir to witness the Princess of Wales Royal Regiment during exercises in the Pyrenees. Pic: CPL MICHAEL STRACHAN



WORTH WAITING FOR: It may have delayed its opening by another year but the excitement surrounding London Paramount remains high - especially after these images were released



FREE FLOW: The Dartford Crossing remains a constant source of discussion, from its free flow tolls to just where the third Thames Crossing should be placed. Pic: HIGHWAYS ENGLAND



CLOSE BUT NO CIGAR: Dover Athletic's FA Cup dream came to an end in front of the live TV cameras as they crashed out 4-0 in the third round at home to Premiership Crystal Palace



EXPLOSION OF COLOUR: The Run or Dye event at Hever Castle saw competitors coated in colour as they completed a course with many raising money for their favoured charities.

CONTINUES on Page 32



LIKE A ROLLERCOASTER: Dreamland's marketing has seen the seaside attraction get plenty of attention but will the company behind it survive after running up £2.9m of debt?



ALL SMILES: Australia skipper Michael Clark jokes with Kent captain Sam Northeast ahead of a warm-up game prior to the Ashes series... which wiped Clark's smile off. Pic: ADY KERRY



TAKING OFF TO WHAT? The Mars One project saw a Kent lab technician shortlisted to take a one-way trip to the Red Planet in a bizarre bid to colonise it and film it for a reality TV show



REGAL WAVE: The Duchess of Cambridge greets the crowds outside the Turner Contemporary in Margate



FROM WALFORD WITH LOVE: Stars of soap EastEnders spent several days filming in Thanet - 8m tuned in to watch it



REMEMBERING THE FEW: Biggin Hill saw a squadron of war-time planes take off to mark the 75th anniversary of the Hardest Day of the Battle of Britain. Pic: KEVIN WILLS



CITY BLAZE: Few will forget the site they encountered when they saw this blaze ripping through Canterbury apartments. Incredibly no one was hurt. Pic: INDIRA MILLAN



THEY'RE BACK: The Clangers returned to our screens with the late Oliver Postgate's son Dan (centre), teaming up with Peter Firmin (right) and new narrator Michael Palin (left).



AND THE SUN SHONE: More than 77,000 visitors flocked to Detling for the Kent Show this summer. Pic: ELLIE HOSKINS

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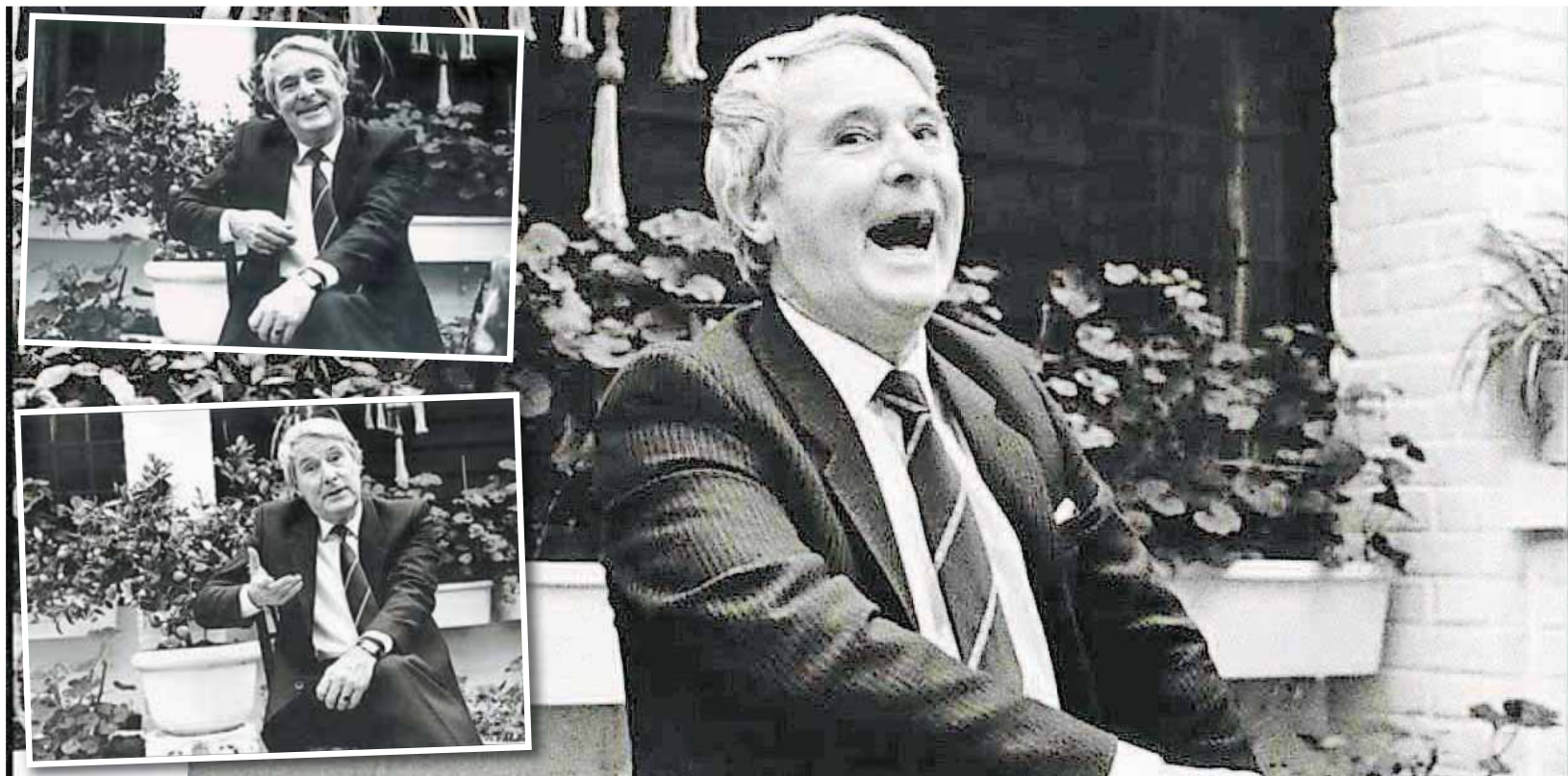
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Laughter and sorrow of comedy great who had lost his 'best mate'

John Stewart Farrier is an acclaimed photographer from Faversham who has been photographing the great and the good for decades. He recalls a session in 1985 with Ernie Wise – of legendary double act Morecambe & Wise...

I WAS having a delightful Sunday lunch at The Manor Hotel in Whitstable and began gazing out through the sea view window, the mist lying heavily over the waterfront.

It was warm and cosy and I started to reminisce, as I looked at my photographic proofs, of visiting Ernie Wise.

It must be that time of year when those two television icons hit our Christmas screens and we all began to laugh all over again at their brilliant editions of The Morecambe and Wise Christmas Shows.

These shows were consistently ratings-toppers with audiences of as many as 28 million and stars queued up to appear with these two comedy geniuses – often only to be set up.

It all began around the May period; Ernie and Doreen were away in Florida and I had to wait for around six weeks before I could take my photographs of one of television's best comedy icons.

This was going to be an important session for me but tinged with some sadness and, indeed, trepidation because it was only a few months after Eric Morecambe, Ernie's comedy partner, his life-long friend, had passed away following a heart attack.

I pulled up outside his home in my car, retrieved the Nikon camera from its case and as I opened the car door, I was greeted with a generous smile, a

handshake and a "Hello, John, I am Ernie Wise, welcome to my home," and was immediately ushered into the conservatory.

As I began to organise myself we started to chat. "May I call you Ernie?" I asked. "Sure," he replied, "everyone else does or in Eric's case – Little Ern", which brought the first of many smiles and giggles I captured through the lens of my camera.

The magic of being in the presence of a great entertainer is just let them do what they do the best; entertain and you can simply click away.

"Let's get going," he said with enthusiasm. "And what about this – and now what about this pose," – a touch of Abbott and Costello who became one of our many idols, as Ernie sat up straight, arched his back and "ahhhhed" out loud.

Well – I could not stop laughing after that performance – such a treat for me to be in front of a master of comedy. I had to put my camera down for a matter of moments and compose myself before we set off again.

"What a treat", I kept saying to myself in secret. "Tell me, Ernie, about Morecambe and Wise," I asked with a smile.

"There's so much I could say, John, but one thing really stands out – we had so much fun doing those sketches, especially before the actual takes. Eric's one-liners had everyone in



COMEDY GREATS: Eric Morecambe and Ernie Wise

creases constantly. It became a joy going to work. Everyone wanted to get involved in our television sketches. It all became somewhat overwhelming – it was so important to get everything just right. Eric was relentless to ensure this – especially on the big Christmas shows.

"You know, John, we were only simple song and dance men that made people laugh. We were also like an old married couple but never argued – there was always so much going on – rehearsal, and more rehearsal and, oh dear, I have now lost my closest

friend, my best mate – we have been together for so long. I am not quite sure what I am going to really do anymore."

"Now, now, don't start getting upset again," came a voice from the kitchen. It was Ernie's wife, Doreen. "No more tears today, love, just smiles, OK – remember that."

With sadness in his eyes he said: "Christmas will not be the same anymore. We worked so hard for our shows – we just wanted them to be the very best around. I think that was so important, John, for everyone to

know. I hope we did that – the television ratings were good and they kept asking for more, so we must have got something right. It may look easy to do but it was really hard work for everyone involved. Expectations were becoming higher and higher and really demanding after every one of our Christmas shows but that's show business – they say."

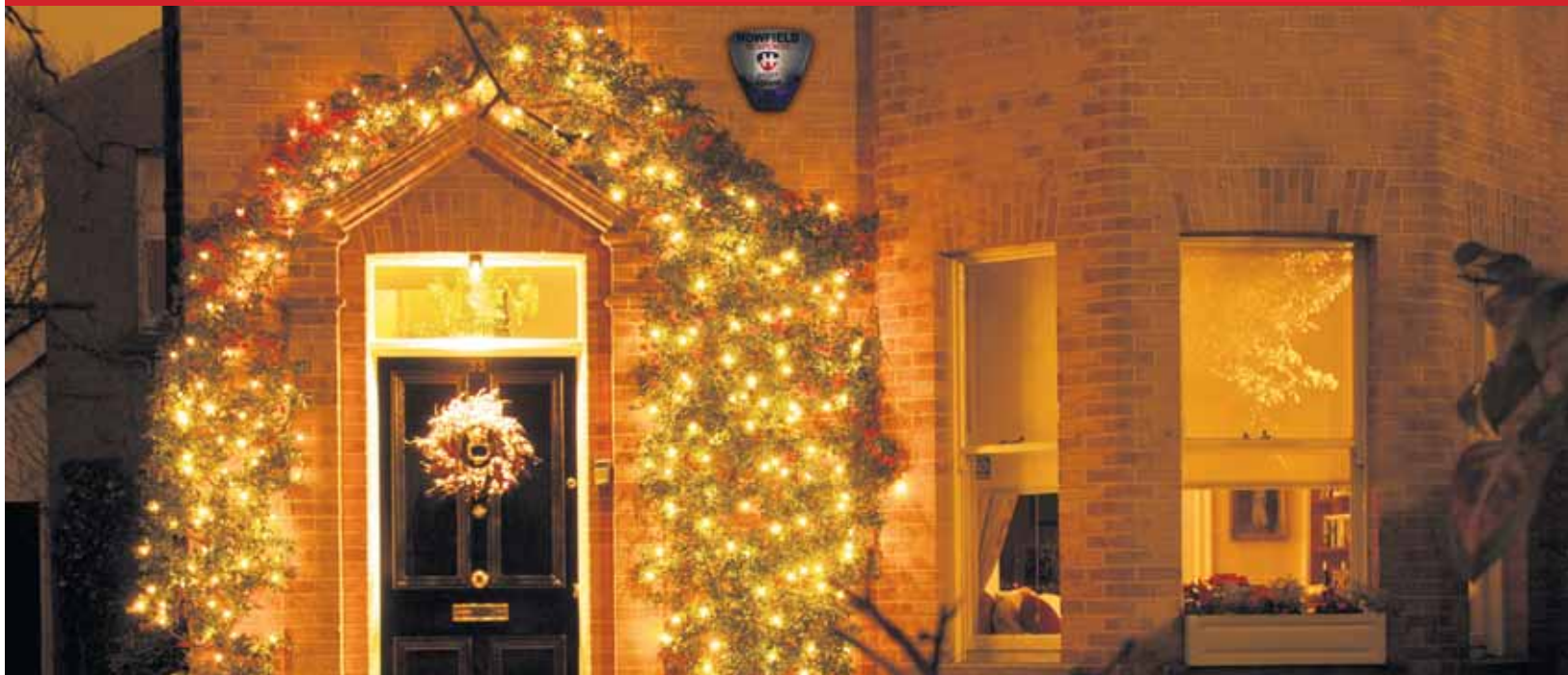
It was time to depart from this comedy genius. I had taken more than 100 photographs in glorious black and white, drank loads of tea and had more giggles than I can ever remember. I had been in the company of a warm and gentle man who was really passionate about his lifetime profession – comedy.

I was tempted to talk about his "short, fat, hairy legs" and tease him about his non-existent toupee but as I departed I could not resist saying, "Well, Ernie, what do you think of it so far?"

He smiled with a sparkle and said: "Rubbish!"

■ **Documentary photographer, John Stewart Farrier** has photographed a number of politicians and prime ministers including Harold Wilson, James Callaghan and Margaret Thatcher and is currently producing a major showcase exhibition of his photographs taken from the world of entertainment to be shown in London next year.

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MUSICAL: The Glenn Miller story will be performed at the Marlowe Theatre.

Credit: Pamela Raith

Legendary Tommy Steele tells the story of Glenn Miller

The musician mysteriously disappeared 70 years ago, writes **Molly Kersey-Law**

MUSICAL legend Tommy Steele will be making his way to Canterbury next year when he stars in the Glenn Miller Story.

Glenn Miller was an American big band musician and recording artist, who released a number of songs including A String Of Pearls, American Patrol, In The Mood and Midnight Serenade.

But in 1944, he disappeared and has never been found, with people wondering what fate befell him.

It has now been some 70 years since Mr Miller vanished over the English Channel, after he flew to Paris to entertain troops during the Second World War.

His disappearance remains shrouded in mystery, with many questions raised about what happened to the musician - was he shot

down or did he crash? And will the mystery ever be solved?

The Glenn Miller Story, which features a 16-piece orchestra, will tell the story of the iconic musical figure, who made a big impact in the 20th century.

Musician Tommy Steele and Bill Kenwright worked together to create the idea for the show.

Mr Steele shot to fame in the fifties, and he achieved his first UK number one song with Singing The Blues in 1957.

Since then his legendary career has seen him release some 20 hit singles and star in 12 films.

He has also performed in stage shows including Singin' In The Rain, Hans Anderson and Half A Sixpence.

A spokesperson for the show explained: "Over the past 15 years, Bill Kenwright and Tommy Steele

have regularly got together to talk about the past, present and future.

"One evening, Bill discovered that his all-encompassing love for Elvis was equal only to Tommy's adoration for Glenn Miller and his orchestra.

"Bill learned that Tommy is a true devotee; travelling all over the world to hear what remains of the original Orchestral Sounds, and is steeped in the knowledge and the glory of what Glenn Miller did for popular music.

"Tommy enthused that Glenn changed the face of music from 1939 to 1943 when he was the most popular recording artist in the world.

"Three years later at a dinner party celebrating Tommy's award as the most popular entertainer of all time, that they came up with The Glenn Miller Story."

Mr Kenwright will be working with Bob Thompson to direct the production.

The pair have already worked together on award-winning musicals including Blood Brothers, Evita and Jesus Christ Superstar.

The choreography will be carried out by Olivier award-winner Bill Deamer.

The Glenn Miller Story will be performed at the Marlowe Theatre from January 12 to 17.

There will be performances at 7.30pm and 2.30pm.

There is limited availability for tickets to the performance, which range from £46.50 to £22.

Concessions are available. For more information, or to book tickets to the show, you can visit www.marlowetheatre.com.

Alternatively you can call the box office on 01227 787787.

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Well-known comic performer Brian Conley comes to Kent

By Molly Kersey-Law

molly.kersy-law@archant.co.uk

COMIC entertainer Brian Conley will be bringing his new show to two Kent venues during his tour of the UK next year.

Mr Conley will be performing his brand new variety show - *Alive and Dangerous* - in Chatham and Margate when he embarks on his 36-date tour of the country.

The show will feature some of Mr Conley's brand new comedy material, as well as some sketches, songs and well-known retrospective material from both the stage and screen.

Mr Conley's TV career has spanned some 40 years and he has won a number of awards including the National Television Award's most popular performer.

He became a household name after he shot to fame on the Brian Conley show, introducing audiences to well-loved characters such as Nick Frisby - who had the catchphrase "It's a puppet."

He has starred ITV sitcoms *The Grimleys* and *Time After Time* - which won a British Comedy Award.



COMIC: Brian Conley will perform in Chatham and Margate

He also presented the Royal Variety Performance five times and BBC National Lottery game show *We've Got Your Number*.

As well as appearing on TV screens numerous times, Mr Conley is also known for his work on the stage.

He made his debut in musical theatre in show *Me And My Girl*, going on to star in Olivier award-winning production *Jolson* and the

acclaimed stage adaptation of musical film *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.

Mr Conley will be performing *Alive And Dangerous* at the Central Theatre, Chatham, on March 12, 2016.

The performance starts at 8pm and tickets are £22.50.

For more information or to book tickets call 01634 338338 or visit www.tickets.medway.gov.uk.

He will be performing at the Margate Winter Gardens on March 13, 2016.

Tickets are priced at £22.50 and the show will begin at 8pm.

For further information, call the box office on 01843 292795 or alternatively you can visit www.margatewintergardens.co.uk.

To find out more about Mr Conley and his work, you can visit www.brianconley.com.

Comedians in Canterbury

COMEDIAN Ed Gamble will be performing at the Marlowe Studio, Canterbury, during the Marlowe Comedy Club event on January 23 at 8pm.

Visit www.marlowetheatre.com to book.



The magic of Glenn Miller

THE Astor Big Band and singers will perform a selection of Glenn Miller's hits including *In The Mood* and *Tuxedo Junction*.

The show, *More Miller Magic*, will be taking place at the Theatre Royal, Margate, on June 18 at 7.30pm.

Call 01843 292795 to book.

'Sensational' 60s show

MUSICAL show *The Sensational 60s Experience* will be performed at the Assembly Hall Theatre, Tunbridge Wells, on February 26 at 7.30pm.

To book, call the box office on 01892 530613.



Band perform in Margate

THE Allen Family Band will be performing at the Tom Thumb Theatre, Margate.

They will be performing on January 30 at 7.30pm.

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To book call, the box office on 01843 221 791 or visit www.tomthumbtheatre.co.uk.

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Irrational show in Margate

ROMESH Ranganathan will bring his show, Irrational, to the Theatre Royal Margate on February 7 at 7.30pm.

Tickets are £14.
To book, visit www.theatre-royal-margate.com.



Community performance

COMMUNITY performance Once Upon A Time will be on stage at the Orchard Theatre, Dartford, on January 18.

The performance will start at 8.15pm.
For more details, or to book, visit www.orchardtheatre.co.uk or call the ticket office on 01322 220000.

Folk artist in Canterbury

FOLK artist Maz O'Connor will be performing at the Marlowe Studio, Canterbury, on January 22 at 8pm.

For tickets, call the box office on 01227 787787 or visit www.marlowetheatre.com.



Musical show on stage

A MUSICAL show starring Gareth Gates and Michael Courtney will be performed at the Margate Winter Gardens on May 27.

Mad About Musicals will be starting at 7.30pm.

To book tickets, you can visit www.margatewintergardens.co.uk.

Hits of the iconic Judy Garland are performed

By Molly Kersey-Law

molly.kersey-law@archant.co.uk

HIT West End and Broadway show End Of The Rainbow will be performed in Bromley.

The show will be running at the Churchill Theatre from March 8 to 12, 2016.

Set in 1968, the production tells the story of Judy Garland, a once-glittering star who has come to London to make an explosive comeback.

However, off stage she faces a number of difficulties. Holed up in her hotel room, she battles with her young new fiancé, her devoted accompanist and her destructive addictions.

Will she be able to conquer her demons and reclaim her crown as a musical icon?

The show features some of the performer's best-known songs including The Man That Got Away, Come Rain Or Come Shine, The Trolley Song and, of course, Somewhere Over The Rainbow.

Lisa Maxwell will be taking on the role of Judy Garland.

Ms Maxwell is best known for her role as Samantha Nixon in



ITV drama The Bill and as a panellist on ITV's Loose Women.

Her other TV credits include EastEnders and the Russ Abbot Show.

She will be joined on stage by Gary Wilmot, whose numerous theatre credits include Me and My Girl, Oklahoma!, Chicago and Dirty Rotten Scoundrels.

He will be taking on the role of Anthony.

Sam Attwater will play Ricky.

Mr Attwater made his acting debut in 2009, playing the role of

Ricky in Channel 4 show Holly-oaks, and later starred as Leon Small in BBC soap EastEnders.

He also won the sixth series of ITV talent show Dancing On Ice in 2011.

End of the Rainbow is directed by Daniel Buckroyd and it is designed by David Shields.

Performances will be taking place at both 2.30pm and 7.30pm.

For more information about the production or to book tickets to the show you can visit www.atgtickets.com/bromley.



PRODUCTION: Sam Attwater will be playing Ricky



PERFORMERS: Gary Wilmot will play Anthony

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Hailee Steinfeld finds music 'incredibly freeing'

Andy Welch talks to the singer about her new EP and making the transition from acting to singing....

HAILEE Steinfeld was just 13 when she landed a Best Supporting Actress nomination at the 2011 Oscars.

Her response to the news?

"Being cast in such an incredible film was an award in itself," the ever modest star insisted.

By then, she was already five years into her career - and today, at 19, she's a veteran. Now she's launching a music career, too.

While conducting interviews to promote her debut EP, Haiz, she's on the set of her latest film, in Vancouver. Besties, in which she's starring alongside Woody Harrelson, will have finished filming by the time you read this.

Ms Steinfeld is currently on the Jingle Ball Tour around major cities in the US.

"I won't lie, I lose track of where I am," she admits.

"With the promo and travel, I don't know what's happening. Movies aren't so bad because you're stationed in one place for a while and that's good, but music, I'm all over the place. But I love being busy. It's certainly better than the alternative."

While she has been singing since she was very young - film fans will have seen her earlier this year in Pitch Perfect 2 playing newcomer Emily - she didn't perform on stage until much more recently.

While most aspiring artists recount their stage debut in the up-



TALENTED: Hailee Steinfeld's EP is out now

stairs room of a local pub, in a youth choir or karaoke, Ms Steinfeld's first time on stage was in front of 20,000 people at the iHeartRadio Festival at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

"I got to perform with Shawn Mendes, one of my favourite artists, and I performed my single Love Myself. It was a surreal experience, people singing a song of mine back to me," she said.

She says her music career got going when she met with the people at Universal subsidiary Republic Records in New York around a year ago.

That led to four or five months of meetings, writing sessions and days in the studio, the results of which can be heard on her EP.

She's recording her debut album,

which she hopes will be released in the spring, and enjoys the contrasts between that and acting.

"It's constantly changing and evolving, and that's something really different to films," she says.

"It's a place where I'm allowed to express whatever's on my mind and not be ashamed or afraid of it."

"It's all usable."

"I'm able to go into that environment, can look however I want, be vulnerable, be open, and encouraged to be so."

"It's incredibly freeing," she continues, "and very different to acting where you're given lines and get instructions on how to act."

Hailee Steinfeld's debut EP Haiz is out now.

Picture of Dorian Grey

A STAGE adaptation of literary legend Oscar Wilde's novel The Picture of Dorian Grey will be performed in Maidstone early next year.

The production will be on stage at the Hazlitt Theatre on January 15, 2016.

Tickets to the show are £15 and the performance starts at 7.30pm.

For more information, or to book tickets, you can visit www.parkwoodtheatres.co.uk.

Comedy star on stage

COMEDIAN Jethro will be performing in Folkestone.

The comedy star will be taking to the stage at the Leas Cliff Hall on February 17, 2016.

The performance will be starting at 7.30pm.

Tickets to the show are £24.15 or £21.25 for theatre card members.

For more details, you can visit www.atgtickets.com/folkestone.

Let It Be is performed

BRINGING the hits of The Beatles to the stage, musical show Let It Be will be performed at the Churchill Theatre, Bromley, from January 25 to 30.

The show features hits including Yesterday, Come Together and Hey Jude.

Performances will take place at 2.30pm and 7.30pm.

For further details, visit www.atgtickets.com/bromley.

A love of bad reviews

RESTAURANT critic Jay Rayner will be giving a talk at the Folkestone Quarterhouse on February 5, 2015, at 7.30pm.

In My Dining Hell, Mr Rayner will explore why people like bad reviews of restaurants, and looks at the worst reviews that his own work has ever received.

The talk is suitable for those aged 14 and over. To book tickets, call the box office on 01303 760750.



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Attenborough has reef encounter

TRAVEL REVIEW: Australia

by Sarah Marshall

EXPLODING in the darkness, thousands of astral flecks dance and sparkle, forming brilliant clusters like galaxies in the night sky. Alien shapes float past me as I hang weightlessly, freed temporarily from the constraints of gravity and suspended above a world which I struggle to identify as my own.

Only when I hoist my head out of the salty seawater and fill my lungs with air do I finally return to reality.

Above, stars beam brightly from another universe but just metres below, in a liquid underworld, there's an even more extraordinary spectacle to behold. I'm lucky enough to be witnessing coral spawning, a mass reproduction which happens only once a year around the time of a full moon.

Guided by torchlight, I'm snorkelling along Australia's Great Barrier Reef, where millions of coral polyps are simultaneously releasing egg and sperm bundles in what resembles an underwater meteor shower. Eventually they will rise to the surface and fertilise, then sink to the ocean floor to become part of the largest natural structure on Earth.

Measuring 2,600km long, made up of 3,000 coral reefs and hosting more than 1,600 species of fish, the Great Barrier Reef is, according to naturalist Sir David Attenborough, "one of nature's greatest wonders".

The wildlife enthusiast first dived here in 1957, and almost 60 years later he's completed a three-part series due to be screened on BBC One this Christmas. Travelling on board 56m research vessel Alucia and using a Triton submersible, he took part in the deepest dives ever attempted on the Barrier Reef.

During a three-week filming sched-



ADVENTURE: Australia's Great Barrier Reef

ule, he visited Lizard Island, a remote, granite continental island 33km off the Queensland coast, where I'm fortunate enough to be experiencing the remarkable coral spawning.

After a 50-minute flight from Cairns in a Cessna light aircraft, stingray-shaped Lizard and neighbouring smaller islands (part of the Lizard Island Group) come into view, with turquoise ribbons fringing each land mass. From above, it's easy to

identify the damage wreaked by two cyclones in 2014 and earlier this year, when almost 85% of vegetation was lost. Following a major refurbishment, the island's only hotel, the upscale Lizard Island Resort, reopened in June, allowing tourists the opportunity to explore this protected National Park.

To get my bearings, I hike to the island's highest point, Cook's Look, famously scaled by explorer Captain

James Cook in 1770, as he searched for a safe passage through the surrounding shoals. I set off on the three-hour round trip at 6am to escape the searing heat, making my way through a mangrove swamp and scrambling across steep boulders sprouting kapok trees between crevices. Yellow-spotted monitors – who inspired Captain Cook's choice of name for the island – skulk timidly into the shade, as trilling, yellow-bel-

TRAVEL FACTS

SARAH Marshall was a guest of luxury Australia specialist Bridge and Wickers.

They offer a tailor-made 10-day Lizard Island and rainforest stay from £3,785 per person.

For more information about what is included in the price and trips available you can call 020 3642 8551 or alternatively you can visit them at www.bridgeandwickers.co.uk.

lied sunbirds compete with the constantly whistling wind, while flitting through wispy fronds of purple kangaroo grass.

From 360m above sea level, I try to pick out Lizard's 24 white sand beaches, seeping into the South Pacific Ocean and the Coral Sea.

The resort can arrange trips to the pristine outer reef, where dive sites include Cod Hole and the ominous sounding Snake Pit, although these are not daily. In fact, anyone wanting to scuba dive should plan to stay for at least three or four nights, to allow rest periods before and after flights.

Short on time, my boyfriend and I use a motorised dinghy boat to explore the island's shallow fringing reefs and go snorkelling. "People say, 'What is the most magical thing you saw in your life; the most magical moment?'" says Attenborough in the first episode of his new Great Barrier Reef programme, due to air in late December. "I always say, the first time I put on a mask and went below the surface and moved in three dimensions with just the flick of my fin."

Those words resonate with me as I immerse myself in another awesome world, where time is quickly forgotten as minutes slip easily into hours.

Film Review by Damon Smith



SNOOPY AND CHARLIE BROWN: THE PEANUTS MOVIE

(U, 93 mins) Animation/Family/Comedy/Drama

IF unabashed sweetness is your weakness then you will be completely helpless in the company of Snoopy And Charlie

Brown: The Peanuts Movie.

Written by Craig and Bryan Schulz, the son and grandson of Charles M Schulz, Steve Martino's film marries the old-fashioned, wholesome sensibilities of the syndicated comic strips with state-of-the-art computer animation. The episodic nature of the script suggests that several bitesize adventures for the titular pooch and his self-doubting master have been sandwiched together and passed off as a fluid narrative.

It's candy floss filmmaking: colourful, sugary and easily digested, expertly spun out of hot air by a vast team of talented animators, who have managed to replicate familiar character designs in shiny 3D. The Peanuts Movie is a big, heady whiff of nostalgia.

It's hard to resist the innate charm and vulnerability of Charlie as he laments his inability to talk to the new girl at school ("I just came

down with a serious case of inadequacy!") and searches for inspiration in a self-help book entitled 10 Ways To Be A Winner.

Everyone loves a trier.

Charlie Brown, voiced by Noah Schnapp, faces his nemesis - the Kite-Eating Tree - and once again comes off second best to Mother Nature.

"You'll never get that to fly. Why? Because you're Charlie Brown!" snorts Lucy, who is voiced by Hadley Belle Miller.

The luckless lad refuses to be downhearted.

Soon after, a Little Red Haired Girl, voiced by Francesca Capaldi, moves in across the street with her family and Charlie develops the most terrible crush.

"She's not that pretty," grumbles Lucy dismissively.

Unable to talk to his new neighbour, even with the encouragement of Snoopy, voiced by Bill Melendez,



or his chums Peppermint Patty, Linus and Pig-Pen, Charlie resolves to catch the girl's eye by winning his school's talent competition.

His plan goes awry and he becomes the laughing stock of the school. Subsequent attempts to win the affection of the Little Red Haired Girl by learning to dance, and writing a school report on "Leo's Toy Story by Warren Peace" also

end in humiliation.

Meanwhile, Snoopy daydreams about becoming a First World War fighter plane pilot and protecting his pooch sweetheart Fifi from the notorious Red Baron.

As dogs of war go, he's irrepressibly cute.

Snoopy And Charlie Brown: The Peanuts Movie is a delightful, gossamer thin diversion.

ARTIFICIAL trees may be convenient, more cost-efficient – not to mention the fact that they don't shed pine needles and require endless vacuum-cleaning or sweeping as a result – but can anything beat the magic of the real thing?

There's the excitement and ritual of picking your tree and driving it home, the gorgeous festive scent, and how wonderful it looks all lit up and decorated. But, for some, real Christmas trees do have a very big downside...

The festive centrepiece is harbouring mould, which could be making you unwell. And the longer your tree is up, the worse you could feel.

As many as a third of Brits – 35 per cent – suffer from an increase of hay fever-like symptoms at Christmas, with real Christmas trees causing most of the problems, according to a recent poll for Prevalin Allergy.

Dubbed 'Christmas tree syndrome', symptoms include itchy nose, watery eyes, wheezing, coughing, chest pains, lethargy and insomnia – and it can even lead to life-threatening pneumonia, in rare serious cases.

Scientists from Upstate Medical University, part of the State University of New York, discovered the condition after they saw an increase in respiratory problems in the weeks leading up to and shortly after December 25.

When they analysed pine needles and bark from 28 Christmas trees, they found 53 cases of mould, which releases spores that can trigger aller-

gic reactions in people who are susceptible.

While the mould is naturally occurring, the process of bringing the tree inside creates the perfect environment for it to grow. Another study found that after two weeks of being on display, the number of airborne mould spores coming from a Christmas tree increases from 800 per 35

cubic-feet to 5,000.

Not everybody will experience symptoms, or any ill effects, when exposed to these mould spores. Like all allergies, the reaction occurs because somebody is personally susceptible, so 'Christmas Tree Syndrome' will only be a problem for those who experience such allergic reactions.

Dr Lawrence Kurlandsky, who con-

ducted the Upstate Medical University research, said at the time: "If you and your children don't have any obvious allergies, then it is probably not going to bother you."

Concerned that you or your family might be affected? Max Wiseberg suggests hosing down your tree before taking it into the house or getting an artificial one out of storage, to try

and get rid of some mould and spores.

"You should also take care when decorating the tree, or again get someone else to do it, as allergens will be disturbed as you move the tree into position and move the branches to hang the baubles and add the lights," he added.

"Putting up the tree as late as possible will help minimise the risk, whilst an air purifier may also help."

FESTIVE: The traditional centrepieces could be making people ill

A 'Christmas tree syndrome'



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Speed limit road confusion

I HAVE just been speeding! I do not usually speed along this road, in fact I drove along at the same speed as I have done for nearly five decades and I was not speeding then.

The stretch of road I am talking about is the A28 dual carriageway from the St Nicholas-at-Wade roundabout to the start of the 40mph limit on entering Birchington.

This has probably not altered since it was built in the 1930s as part of the new 'arterial' road network, that was being constructed over the whole country.

There are no additional junctions or hazards, just wide open fields either side.

KCC have decided that this dual carriageway has to be downgraded from the national speed limit of 70mph to 50 mph. Is this because a cabbage lorry self-destructed and run across the road?

Or, is it because KCC is spending about £10 million on new digital speed cameras and needs the cash from selling Speed Awareness Courses to pay for these new cameras?

Was there any protest from ruling Thanet Ukip councillors, if not, then they have not read their own election manifesto!

Terry Hudson,
Whitstable

We risk missing great talent

EVERYWHERE, all around us, talent abounds. Talent we cannot see and of which we are largely unaware.

It manifests itself in various ways, but in particular within the area of young people who, mainly due to their suffering from Asperger's Syndrome, are overlooked or deliberately ignored when it comes to selection for a position and weighing up of talent.

These young people – or not so young as they become subject to the passing of years, as are we all – find themselves constantly between two stools – that of ability and that of selection.

As a country we are seemingly unaware of, or else deliberately dismissive of, the vast range of talent which we either ignore or dismiss – to our shame and our detriment.

What priceless value we are losing; what wasteful reserves of energy and knowledge are lost to us, all because we are unwilling to utilise our reserves of knowledge

LETTER OF THE WEEK



Spare a thought for truckers and their health and their wellbeing

I REFER to your article 'Green light for more clamping power on illegally parked lorries' (KoS 13/12).

Unfortunately, it appears those people and organisations mentioned are blissfully ignorant of the extreme difficulties truckers face daily, that can and do adversely affect their health and wellbeing and, indirectly, that of other road users. I imagine such folk are likely to be prominent among those that whine when they find shelves in shops empty due to the fact lorry drivers have been unable to complete their deliveries efficiently and on time!

The road haulage industry has expanded markedly over the last 100 years but, in contrast, essential facilities for drivers (ie lorry parking and transport cafes) have largely disappeared or have, perhaps, been replaced by 'fast-food' outlets like McDonalds etc. Thus, toilets and parking facilities for truckers using the trunk and county road system, especially those driving large rigs, are often difficult to find. There is also the very important and relevant issue of compliance with driver regulations and rest periods. Consequently, due to the totally

inadequate provision of public toilets and suitable lorry parking, the hinterland of many lay-bys alongside trunk and county roads, where numerous truckers pee and defecate, are now seriously contaminated such that public sector operatives have to frequently carry out the very difficult and unpleasant task of removing human waste! This situation makes one feel ashamed to be British

As a specialist property developer, I believe it is essential to create many more strategically located Trunk Road Service Areas that provide adequate secure parking for lorries throughout our highway network.

Both potential solutions would contribute towards eliminating the degrading practices that are evident at virtually any lay-by.

Clearly, these problems can no longer be ignored: the Government, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Authorities must make it a priority to provide adequate funding to rid the countryside of this inevitable public nuisance.

Raymond A Bulpit,
via email

environment as a consequence.

David Alston,
Shortlands

Let's not forget real Christmas

AS Christmas becomes more and more commercialised we must hold fast to the simple, beautiful and true meaning of it, the birth of Jesus.

Oh Holy Night is what Christmas is really about.

Mary McNulty,
Brenchley

Dreamland's lack of vision?

SO Dreamland is suffering from a £2.9million crisis? Not surprising if one places all one's money without any vision or formula. Especially if you then blame the Scenic Railway for the problem.

The reality in the theme park world is adaptability and vision with fun and attraction value.

Dreamland has failed to present or provide any of these. They say too many cooks spoil the broth; well they have no excuses because they were told yet they chose to ignore.

Being one of just four consultants engaged on the only true £50m theme park in Turkey years ago, I know what works and I saw how one kills a perfectly viable and profitable park.

As for placing their hope on the Frosted Fairground, I can only say good luck because Thanet will need it especially if that's all they've got.

Derek Packham,
Deal

We'll park where we can, thanks

I WOULD just like to point out to John Groves that as long as it is legal to park in his road and a driver has his car taxed and insured he is perfectly entitled to park there.

You might own an expensive house but you don't own the road.

Colin Winchester,
Dartford

Parking letter is just a big joke

JOHN Groves' complaint in his letter that "it should never be legal to park outside someone else's home" is laughable, impractical and nonsense.

He mentions that he has bought "an expensive house" and so presumably lives in an area where there are garages, drives and homes with plenty of space set well back from the pavement.

What about the rest of us paupers who have to live in terraced streets with no allocated parking? You're lucky if you can find room for one car on the street you live in sometimes, so parking it outside someone else's house is pretty much the only course of action.

If that is all Mr Groves has to worry and complain about, he's very fortunate indeed.

Martin Caley,
Gravesend

KOS 10 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

AS part of our commitment to providing the best service to you, we have produced our 10 guiding principles

Kent on Sunday will:

- 1) Be available in every postcode in Kent.
- 2) Be fair, accurate and balanced.
- 3) Be written in clear, concise English.
- 4) Not be overly sensational.
- 5) Have a sense of humour.
- 6) Have an easily understood division between news, comment and advertising.
- 7) Seek to celebrate as well as constructively criticise.
- 8) Highlight topical issues of concern to

people living in the county.

9) Spotlight individual cases which raise broader concerns.

10) Champion causes that it feels are important to the well-being of the county and its people.

We hope you enjoy Kent on Sunday.



**Dunorlan Park,
Tunbridge Wells**
by **Guy Gentry**

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La meccanica delle emozioni



Model shown: Alfa Giulietta 1.4 TB MultiAir 150 hp Sprint Speciale incl. Special Paint at £510, OTR £23,830, Range of official fuel consumption figures for the Alfa Giulietta range: Urban 29.7 - 60.1 mpg (9.5 - 4.7 l/100km); Extra Urban 54.3 - 88.3 mpg (5.2 - 3.2 l/100km); Combined 41.5 - 74.3 mpg (6.8 - 3.8 l/100km). CO₂ emissions 157 - 99 g/km. Fuel consumption and CO₂ figures are obtained for comparative purposes in accordance with EC directives/regulations and may not be representative of real-life driving conditions. Personal Contract Purchase. *Promotion available on Alfa Giulietta 1.4 TB MultiAir 150 hp Sprint Speciale incl. Special Paint at £510 registered by 31 December 2015. ¹Alfa Deposit Contribution only available in conjunction with Alfa Romeo Preferenza PCP. With Alfa Romeo Preferenza you have the option to return the vehicle and not pay the final payment, subject to the vehicle not having exceeded an agreed annual mileage (a charge of 6p per mile for exceeding 6,000 miles per annum in this example) and being in good condition. Finance subject to status. Guarantees may be required. Terms and Conditions apply. At participating Dealers only. Alfa Romeo Financial Services, PO BOX 4465, Slough, SL1 0RW. We work with a number of creditors including Alfa Romeo Financial Services.

By Steve Loader
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

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MX-5: New Mazda offers driver appeal, the latest technology and value for money... go on you know you want one!



Mazda MX-5 – our star car of 2015

KoS CAR OF THE YEAR: Four generations on, the Mazda roadster uprates its awesome reputation for delivering the most driving fun, pound for pound...

MAZDA'S MX-5 roadster is already short-listed for European Car of the Year.

But the result won't be known until late February, so we've jumped the gun and already made it our star car of the year.

It's the fourth generation of the Japanese brand's flag waver and evokes both Mazda's past and future.

The original MX-5 rescued the company's image 25 years ago and the latest version showcases the brand's brilliant Skyactiv technology – tuning driver enjoyment, boosting power to weight ratio, and slashing consumption and emissions.

This has allowed the new Mk 4 MX-5 to echo the scale, weight and pleasure of the Mk 1, retaining that front engine/rear-driven balance, yet carrying the best tech and safety now demanded by consumers and legislation.

More aggressive styling makes it look bigger in pictures, causing a quick mental re-calibration when viewing in the metal.

But while you feel snug in the cockpit – a visual trick enhanced by door cappings curving inwards toward the fascia – the car is as spacious as the previous generations, all of which were comfy enough for a long distance business trip, let



alone sporty expeditions or weekends away.

As ever, the properly watertight soft top, can be raised and lowered easily and in seconds.

The big question for buyers is: 129bhp 1.5-litre petrol or 158bhp 2.0-litre engine? The former is the essence of the original, while the latter is by far the most performance-orientated MX-5 to

date – going a long way to silencing those “it's not a 'hairy-chested' sports car” jibes.

For the money (from £18,495) the 1.5 is best, though the latter does feel more grown up with its extra power and beefed up chassis. Either way, the best affordable sports car you can buy is even better value now.



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Price shown includes delivery to dealer, number plates, 20% VAT, 12-month government road fund licence and £55 first registration fee. Price shown is manufacturer's recommended retail price, which applies to vehicle shown when ordered by 31 December 2015 and registered by 31 March 2016. KADJAR shown has optional Flame Red Renault i.d. metallic paint, available at an additional £625.

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Seat's Mango city car works for Mii...

SEAT's city motor uses fashion card to trump many rivals for style, while playing to space and common sense strengths, writes **Steve Loader...**

SEAT looked to have drawn the short straw with its Mii city car.

After all, the car's obvious rivals were the VW Up and Skoda Citigo, the trio having been cloned by their VW Audi parent group.

The points of difference for the VW and Skoda were obvious: with the Up's more upmarket badge and design tweaks making it stand out, while the Citigo had a great name for an urban runabout, plus the Czech brand's value/customer satisfaction reputation.

So, with the prestige and budget cards already taken, where was SEAT to go? It could hardly tout the little Mii's sporting credentials, as with FR and Cupra halo versions of its other cars.

The solution was to highlight the Mii as a fashion item à la MINI, in the form of 'by Mango' special editions – a clever tie-up with the Catalan fashion house.

Of course, it's fairly obvious which sex these particular Mii variants are aimed at, but that doesn't mean they are exclusive, because anyone would like the essence of the Mii and its VW and Skoda sisters: space, practicality and driving fun within an incredibly



compact exterior.

Just what you want in a city car and possibly only matched by Hyundai's i10.

Priced from £11,995 – though the Mii range starts from as little as £8,355 – the Mango line-up comes in three or five door format, with 1.0-litre three-cylinder petrol power

available as a 60PS (59bhp) or 75PS (74bhp) unit, both married to a five-speed manual gearbox – you must look elsewhere in the Mii line-up for an auto.

The difference in price between 60 and 75PS is a piffling £165 and the margin in fuel consumption negligible – 62.8 (combined mpg)



versus 60.1 – especially in 'real world' motoring, and you would struggle to notice the performance difference in town. Road tax is zero with the 60PS too, whereas the 75PS attracts £20/year after year one.

But I prefer the 75PS as tested here, for its greater refinement when the Mii stretches its little legs out of

SEAT Mii by Mango

1.0 75PS 3dr

Price: **from £11,155**

Driving appeal: **★★★★**

Image: **★★★★**

Space: **★★★★**

Value: **★★★★**

Running costs: **★★★★**

How green?: **★★★★**

Best rival: **Hyundai i10**

town – it's nice to have that option.

Either way, the engine revs well; of course, it has the discordant 'box of angry pheasants' tone of a three-cylinder, but this is well damped and driving soon feels like fun, helped by a crisp gearchange and steering combination.

The cabin is enormous, as much a masterpiece of cubic engineering as the original Mini, with excellent leg, head and elbowroom for such a small car.

Nor is this room at the expense of boot space, which is phenomenal, so a spare wheel incurs little penalty on space.

The dashboard is logical and stowage facilities generous and the Mango accoutrements give this Mii a suitably upmarket feel.



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Official Government fuel consumption figures (Range): Urban cycle, Extra urban, Combined (litres per 100km/imp mpg) & CO₂ emissions (g/km): Highest: Citroën C1 PureTech 82 manual 5-door Fuel 5.4/52.3, 3.7/76.3, 4.3/65.7, 99. Lowest: Citroën C1 VTI 68 545 manual 5-door Fuel 4.5/62.8, 3.4/83.1, 3.8/74.3, 88. MPG figures are achieved under official EU test conditions, intended as a guide for comparative purposes only, and may not reflect actual on-road driving conditions.

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SPORTING 2015: Kent welcomed the Aussies (main picture), new Gillingham boss Justin Edinburgh (right) and speed machine Adam Gemili (bottom right)



2015 Review: Part One

We take a look back at the best of sport in Kent between January and June...

Review...

By Tom Pyman

tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

THE year of 2015 began with a mouth-watering FA Cup tie, as non-league Dover Athletic entertained Premier League giants Crystal Palace at Crabble.

Alan Pardew's side were comfortable 4-0 winners courtesy of goals from Scott Dann, Kevin Doyle and Dwight Gayle, but the presence of the BBC Sport cameras and increased revenue will have done wonders for the Whites regardless, who went on to enjoy a solid season in the National League, ultimately finishing just outside the play-off places in eighth position.

January also saw changes at Gillingham, as boss Peter Taylor was sacked following a poor run of form and replaced by Justin Edinburgh.

The former Tottenham star had an instant impact, guiding the Gills from a dangerous position just above the relegation zone when he took over, to a respectable mid-table finish of 12th in League One.

Edinburgh had said following his appointment: "Exciting is the first word and it's been a little bit of a long process but one where everyone has conducted themselves professionally and correctly. I'm delighted to be manager of the club and it's another step up for myself on the ladder.

There was significant success for Margate and Maidstone United, who

both gained promotion to the National League South following extraordinary campaigns.

The Stones stormed to first position in the Isthmian League Premier, with Jay Saunders' team claiming 98 points throughout the 46-game season.

The title was effectively won at Champion Hill, home of Dulwich Hamlet, on April 18, with Maidstone drawing 0-0 and title rivals Hendon also drawing 0-0 away at Grays Athletic, inciting a pitch invasion of nearly 1,000 travelling Stones fans, before it was officially clinched on home soil a week later with a 3-2 win over East Thurrock United.

Terry Brown's side, meanwhile, were victorious in the play-offs, as they beat Hendon 1-0 in the final courtesy of a Ryan Moss goal.

In winter sport, West Kingsdown's skeleton queen Lizzy Yarnold completed a remarkable career grand slam of titles when she secured the World Championship crown in Winterberg, Germany to add to her Olympic, World Cup and European championship titles.

Meanwhile, Chatham's paralympic champion Charlotte Evans was ruled out of guiding visually impaired skier Kelly Gallagher in the 2015 Para-alpine World

Championships after suffering a concussion.

The skier injured herself when colliding with her partner during training in Austria in March, as Gallagher clipped the back of Evans' skis when following in her guide's slipstream.

Later that month, the injuries to Kent stars continued, as Sheppey-based MCE Insurance British Superbike champion Shane 'Shakey' Byrne suffered a smash during pre-season testing of his bike at Almeria in Spain.

During the ride, the four-time champion suffered what he described as a 'heavy' crash in the final session of the day and was forced to undergo surgery ahead of the Superbike Championship beginning.

April proved to be a busy month for Kentish outfit Ebbsfleet United, who announced plans to start work on a new stadium following a takeover by Kuwaiti businessman, Dr Abdulla Al-Humaidi before relieving manager Jamie Day of his duties, who was replaced by Daryl McMahon.

The Fleet ended up finishing eighth in the National League South, thus missing out on a play-off spot and promotion.

In cricket, Kent – who enjoyed the return of Matt Coles to the club during the off-season – got off to a tricky start to their County Champi-



FA CUP AT CRABBLE: Dover took on Crystal Palace in the FA Cup during January and snow queen Lizzy Yarnold (inset) won gold again

onship campaign with defeat to Essex, and failed to register a win until May, creating something of a miserable mood around the county.

However, perhaps ironically, this was significantly brightened by the visit of Australia, which created a real, positive buzz around the blend of old and new surroundings of the Spitfire ground.

The Aussies, in their first match on English soil since jetting in to prepare for the Ashes, were clearly keen to ensure their big names bedded in and a crowd-pleasing line-up saw skipper Michael Clarke lead out a team which included the likes of Mitchell Johnson,

Shane Watson, Peter Siddle and Brad Haddin.

There was success for Maidstone Rugby Club in May, as they were victorious in the RFU Intermediate Cup final, seeing off Bridgnorth on the hallowed turf at Twickenham.

Both sides were unbeaten prior to the game, but Maidstone ran out 31-18 winners, crowning an all-conquering season for the club.

Head coach Paul Hathaway said afterwards: "We came here knowing the pressure of the occasion on a lot of players was going to be immense, but we asked them to try and keep cool heads, try and keep control of the game and keep the tempo up and I couldn't have asked for a better start."

Elsewhere, Tonbridge Athletic Club's Tom Bosworth finished in the highest ever position by a British athlete in the men's 20km at the European Race Walking Cup in Murcia, Spain with a time of 1:23:54, while American muscle took centre stage at Brands Hatch with the American SpeedFest III taking over the Sevenoaks circuit.

The first half of the year ended in heartbreak for Dartford sprinter Adam Gemili, though.

Just moments after writing his name into the record books by becoming only the second British runner to ever clock up a sub-10 second 100m and a sub-20 second 200m after John Regis, he injured his hamstring at the Birmingham Grand Prix, ruling himself out of the World Athletics Championships in Beijing.

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